Man allegedly assaults woman with gun. PAGE 2
Chamber meets with Education Commissioner Camacho. PAGE 3

Hafa Adai!

$1

Saipan Tribune

Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 43
THURSDAY FEBRUARY 29, 2024
www.saipantribune.com
www.facebook.com/saipantribune

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
Dignitaries and Commonwealth Utilities Corp. staff cut the ribbon, unveiling the Sadog Tasi Wastewater Treatment Plant's new clarifier.

CUC unveils new wastewater treatment plant clarifier

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Since 2018, staff of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s Wastewater Treatment Plant in Sadog Tasi had to manually clarify wastewater before the water could be released into the ocean. That will no longer happen now, thanks to a newly installed clarifier that was unveiled yesterday at the plant—signaling an end to the staff's backbreaking work.

According to John Tinger, U.S. Environmental

See CUC on Page 4

IPI license revocation hearing begins

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC counsel Michael Chen, on the TV screen, cross-examines Commonwealth Casino Commission executive director Andew Yeom during the hearing whether to revoke or not the exclusive casino license of IPI yesterday at the conference room of the Office of the Governor on Capital Hill.

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Casino Commission board started yesterday the hearing that will enable it to decide whether or not to revoke the exclusive casino license of Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC. The hearing ended past 5pm and will continue today, Thursday, after the board's regular monthly meeting.

See IPI on Page 4

MICRONESIAN COLLEGE LEADERS ON SAIPAN NMC
This week Northern Marianas College is hosting trustees/regents and presidents from Micronesia, including Guam Community College, College of the Marshall Islands, College of Micronesia-FSM, and Palau Community College, for a historic convening of trustees as they formalize their collaborative efforts. The trustees will also participate in the Pacific Islands Governance Leadership Institute training led by the Association of Community College Trustees. The ACCT Governance Leadership Institute is a governance-development and educational program for trustees and CEOs of community colleges nationwide. The presidents of American Samoa Community College and the University of Guam will also be joining the meeting of college presidents who are part of the Pacific Postsecondary Education Council that will be held Saturday.

Dewey to return to Indiana

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Representatives of the Indiana Allen County Sheriff's Department have now arrived on Saipan to escort and bring fugitive Charles Lee Dewey III, alias Carter Allen Widmor, back to Indiana this week.

Assistant attorney general

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Kilili endorses Propst as CNMI's delegate

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) has thrown his support behind the candidacy of Rep. Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan), who is aiming to succeed him in the U.S. Congress this Nov. 5 general election.

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INSIDE

SUPPLEMENT
The start of the Lenten season means between now and Easter Sunday, many Catholic devotees will be observing the traditional meat-free diet every Friday.
PAGE 10

BUSINESS
The excitement continues to build for the 2024 Friends of Business Summit: CyberTech Edition as the CNMI Small Business Development Center Network announces Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan as the venue for this groundbreaking event.
PAGE 13

WORLD
Israel and Hamas are inching toward a new deal that would free some of the roughly 130 hostages held in the Gaza Strip in exchange for a weekslong pause in the war, now in its fifth month.
PAGE 14

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

Man allegedly assaults woman with gun

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Superior Court has imposed a $20,000 bail on a habitual offender who allegedly assaulted with a shotgun a woman whom he had accused of infidelity.

Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho imposed a $20,000 cash bail on Tinian resident Pedro Barcinas Mendiola during a bail hearing last Monday.

Mendiola, 62, is facing charges of assault with a dangerous weapon, assault and battery to include domestic violence, and disturbing the peace.

Mendiola is a habitual offender whose record fills nearly three pages, with some cases going as far back as 1981.

After his hearing, Mendiola was remanded back to Department of Corrections' custody and was ordered to return to court on March 6 for a preliminary hearing while his arraignment is set for March 11.

According to court records, an off-duty police officer and her mother filed a complaint with the Tinian DPS against Mendiola last Feb. 23.

The mother told police that Mendiola—her husband—had been accusing her of cheating on him.

She said that on the night of Feb. 22, Mendiola accused her of cheating, took her to the Suicide Cliff memorial, and threatened to throw her off the cliff.

She begged Mendiola to stop and repeatedly told him she really needed to use the restroom. She said Mendiola drove back to their home and kept accusing her of infidelity.

When they arrived at their residence, the victim said she went into the bathroom while Mendiola continued to shout at her.

Their daughter, an off-duty police officer, came out of the bedroom and asked her mother what was going on. Unfortunately, they couldn't talk much as Mendiola was around.

The next day, at around 6:30am, the victim told police she woke up to use the bathroom, but Mendiola came and dragged her into the living room where he allegedly began slapping her.

During the altercation, the daughter came out of her bedroom and said she saw Mendiola slapping her mother's face with both his hands.

She said she immediately separated them and kept yelling at Mendiola to stop.

The daughter said Mendiola continued to shout at her mother, accusing her of cheating on him. The daughter said he then grabbed his shotgun and loaded bullets into it. Mendiola allegedly threatened to kill them both.

The daughter said during this time, she took her son, mother, and her service-firearm, got into her vehicle, and left their residence. They went to the police to report the incident.

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The Terrace offers 25% discount on daily lunch buffet

The Terrace at Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan is excited to announce a special deal on its lunch buffet. From Monday to Saturday, between 11am and 2pm, locals can enjoy a 25% discount on prices while stepping into a culinary journey and indulging in all the flavors.

For just $40 per adult and $20 per child (ages 4-11), diners can choose from a variety of delicious hot dishes and enjoy highlights from our made-to-order pasta station, a selection of sushi and sashimi, a customizable fresh salad bar, one smoked dish, and a gelato station. To add, lunch includes beverages, such as coffee, tea, and more.

To enjoy throughout the week, on Sundays from 11am to 2pm, guests can treat themselves to a lavish Sunday Brunch for $65 per adult and $25 per child (ages 4-11). This indulgent brunch features an array of offerings including seafood on ice, a succulent roast pig, a pasta station, a sushi and sashimi bar, several choices of smoked meats, hot dishes, and free-flowing draft beer, red and white wine, sparkling wine, mimosas, and rose wine. Make sure to save room for a wide spread of dessert and a delicious gelato station with toppings and sauces.

Create memorable moments and enjoy all the flavors at The Terrace throughout the week. For reservations and inquiries, email restaurants.cprsaipan@ihg.com or call at (670) 234-6412.

Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan is a 422-room hotel located in Garapan. Guests will be greeted by the resort's lush tropical gardens and panoramic view of Micro Beach, with Crowne Plaza's warm and friendly hospitality ensuring a seamless arrival. ***(PR)***

PUBLIC NOTICE

The CNMI Department of Commerce, Central Statistics Division will start the CNMI 2024 Prevailing Wage Study (PWS) survey beginning on March 01, 2024 and notifies all businesses and employers in the CNMI to log on to the CSD Data Collection Portal and complete the PWS survey questionnaire.

All businesses and employers (Private & Public), with and with no employees, are urged to complete this survey before March 15, 2024.

Data Collection Portal Link: http://cnmidata.commerce.gov.mp/dev1/

Chamber meets with Education Commissioner Camacho

/CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
From left to right: Saipan Chamber of Commerce executive director Kimberly Camacho, Education Commissioner Dr. Lawrence Camacho, Chamber board president Joe C. Gurerrero, Chamber co-op student Miracle Aldan, Chamber board director Kevin McCale, and Chamber vice president Dr. Joshua Wise.

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce recently hosted a productive meet-and-greet with Dr. Lawrence Camacho, Commissioner of Education for the CNMI Public School System. The meeting, held at Chamber's conference room on Feb. 28, 2024, facilitated open and insightful discussions on collaboration opportunities between the Chamber and PSS to enhance educational programs for the youth of the Marianas.

During the session, Chamber representatives engaged in meaningful dialogue with Camacho regarding existing programs under PSS that the Chamber supports, as well as avenues to further improve and expand these initiatives. Camacho shared his personal journey and passion for education, emphasizing his commitment to serving the community of his home island.

In a statement, Camacho expressed optimism about the partnership between PSS and Chamber, stating, "We are setting the stage for some great opportunities and designed outcomes, coming out of this partnership we're establishing between PSS and Chamber. Today's generation of students are excited to learn theories in the classroom and from textbooks; however, they are even more excited to gain experiential learning opportunities in the workplace environment. Therefore, we will partner and expand our efforts when it comes to cooperative education, internships, and scholarship opportunities through this partnership…and as a result, I am grateful of the fact that the Chamber is committed to working with PSS on future strategic initiatives that address the excitement."

Chamber board president Joe C. Guerrero stated, "On behalf of the board of directors and its members, we are excited about working with the new Commissioner of Education and his team of dedicated education professionals. The Chamber has been working with PSS for decades and today's meeting was a renewed commitment and we share Camacho's vision of partnering on different programs to provide experiential learning opportunities for our youth. As business people we like to measure and track performance and Camacho's approach to building programs that measure our students' growth brings much value to the students as well as the business community. At the end of the day this partnership is for our community and we're hopeful that students will have more opportunities than they've ever had and really seeing firsthand what options are available for them."

The Saipan Chamber has also been collaborating with the Tinian Chamber of Commerce and Rota Chamber of Commerce and intends to find ways to include them in these programs so that our youth in the neighboring islands may have just as many opportunities as our youth on Saipan.

Chamber executive director Kimberly Camacho shared that she has been working with PSS Career and Technical Education department director, Dr. Jessica Taylor, and launched its inaugural program in partnership, "The Career Exploration Summer Internship Program" last summer and she intends to continue the program this coming summer. "I have been working with Dr. Taylor and she has provided SCC with great guidance throughout the initial program. We're meeting soon to begin discussions for this year's summer program and while I understand last year's program was a success, there is always more room for improvement and we look forward to growing what we already have going for our youth and take it to the next level," said Camacho.

The Saipan Chamber reaffirms its dedication to collaborating with the Public School System to bridge the gap between education and the workforce, nurturing the future leaders of the Marianas. The Saipan Chamber looks forward to further strengthening this partnership for the betterment of our community.

The Saipan Chamber is a non-profit organization whose mission is to empower enterprises as a resource, advocate, and connector for Saipan's private sector. Its vision is to create an island where businesses, family, and community succeed as one.

For more information or to learn how to become a Saipan Chamber member, visit online at www.saipan-chamber.com, call 234-7150, or visit the second floor of the Marianas Business Plaza (Suite 201-A). ***(PR)***

DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB24-GOV/OGM-42400052

SUBMISSION DATE: MARCH 27, 2024 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

"OFFICE SPACE LEASE FOR THE OFFICE OF GRANTS MANAGEMENT & STATE CLEARINGHOUSE"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT BLDG NO. 12552, ANATAHAN DRIVE, CAPTIOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB CAN BE MADE TO THE OFFICE OF GRANTS MANAGEMENT & STATE CLEARINGHOSUE BY MARCH 15, 2024, TO MR. EPIPHANIO CABRERA JR. VIA EMAIL AT epi.cabrera@gov.mp

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ EPIPHANIO E. CABRERA, JR.
ADMINISTRATOR, OGM

/S/ BRIEN S. NICHOLAS JR.
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS

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For more information, contact Archie Ajoste, archie.ajoste@gmail.com, or 670-664-2160.

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Program

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

OPENING DATE: February 29, 2024 CLOSING DATE: March 15, 2024 TIME: 4:00 P.M.

NMHC JVA NO.	Positions:	Salary:
2024-006	Chief Financial Officer (CFO)	$90,000.00 to $100,000.00 per annum (UNGRADED)

Employment application form, detailed job description, qualification requirements and other information may be accessed at the NMHC website at www.nmhcgov.net.

Applicants may submit their applications through the following options: Submission at the at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan; Drop Box located in front of the NMHC Central Office building; or email application and documents to officemanager@nmhcgov.net.

All applicants must complete and submit the NMHC Employment Application Form together with required documents that are listed in the Employment Application Package. Failure to provide the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. NMHC and all its properties are drug-free zones; therefore, selected applicant will be subject to pre-employment drug screening.

It is the policy of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) that the merit system will be applied and administered according to the principle of equal opportunity for all citizens and nationals as defined by its personnel regulations and the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Constitution regardless of age, race, sex, religion, political affiliation or belief, marital status, disability or place of origin.

For inquiries, please contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager, at (670) 234-6866/9447or by email to officemanager@nmhcgov.net . NMHC is a fair housing agency and an equal opportunity provider, lender and employer.

/s/
JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Division
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: cnmi-cdbg-dr@nmhcgov.net
Website: http://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

For Immediate Release
(February 27, 2024)

"NMHC will also suspend application intake for its CDBG-DR Rehabilitation/Reconstruction Program"

Due to an increased volume of Pre-Qualification application packets received to date and to assess the actual number of applicants that may be able to be assisted as well as the urgency to speed up processing of already submitted grant applications for applicants determined eligible for financial assistance, the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) is notifying the general public that it will also **SUSPEND** accepting new applications for its CDBG-DR Rehabilitation/Reconstruction program effective March 1, 2024.

Depending on the number of grant applications approved and subject to funding availability, NMHC may resume application intake.

Thank you and for more information, please contact NMHC CDBG-DR Division at Tel. Nos. 233-9447/9448/9449/9450 or via email cnmi-cdbg-dr@nmhcgov.net

"NMHC is an equal employment and fair housing public agency"

'$49.2M in govt's total negative expenditures reported'

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Finance's report for the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2023 that ended Sept. 30, 2023, shows a total of $49.2 million in negative expenditures across 67 activities, according to Senate president Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan).

In line with this, DeLeon Guerrero asked Finance Secretary Tracy B. Norita on Tuesday to provide her the accounting entries or a copy of the general ledger that shows the financial flow of transactions causing these 67 activities to have negative balances of $49,256,781.

She also noted that, according to the FY 2023 Governor's Annual Report, $4.7 million is reported in the general fund that was transferred from Commonwealth Economic Development Authority, while $3.2 million is reported in the general fund that was reimbursed by the federal Medicaid, yet the funds were not identified as additional revenues available for supplemental appropriation by the Legislature.

DeLeon Guerrero said that, according to the governor's report, $4,746,993.26 ($4,435,871.41 plus $311,121.85) is reported in the general fund that was transferred from CEDA. She said it relates to the surplus funds of the State Small Business Credit Initiative. DeLeon Guerrero said surplus funds of the SSBCI program are to be deposited into the general fund.

She noted that Public Law 3-68—the Planning and Budgeting Act of 1983 (Planning and Budgeting Act)—requires that any additional revenues received by the CNMI after the CNMI budget law for the fiscal year is enacted shall be reported to the Legislature for appropriation.

DeLeon Guerrero said it appears that the $4.7 million and the $3.2 million were additional revenues that should have been reported to the Legislature for supplemental appropriation in fiscal year 2023.

Citing the Planning and Budgeting Act, the Senate president said she believes that both cases ($4.7 million and $3.2 million) would qualify as additional revenues of the Commonwealth that were required to be reported to the Legislature.

She said unless the Legislature recognized the $4.7 million and $3.2 million as additional resources by supplemental appropriation, the Planning and Budgeting Act prohibited the expenditure of these funds in fiscal year 2023.

DeLeon Guerrero said the administration/Finance and the Legislature must collaborate on the annual appropriations acts, but that requires Finance to be transparent on any, and all, revenues received by the CNMI, including additional revenues during any fiscal year.

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

Dignitaries and Commonwealth Utilities Corp. staff pose for a photo after the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Sadog Tasi Wastewater Treatment Plant's new clarifier.

CUC

From page 1

Protection Agency investigator who has been closely monitoring the Sadog Tasi treatment plant for 10 years, he has witnessed the incredible efforts made by plant operators to thoroughly clarify wastewater to ensure the protection of Saipan's waters. Clarification is when suspended solids are separated from wastewater, mainly through gravity.

"We recognize the incredible efforts of the onsite operators to keep this plant running. During the time this clarifier was down, these operators were able to manage the system consistently [and] achieve those limits even without a functioning clarifier. The wastewater crew devised an improvised system using PVC, duct tape, and all sorts of materials. I don't think anyone in the country has seen anything like it. But just through hard work and perseverance, for years, they were able to keep the treatment plant running to protect the waters of the CNMI," he said.

Finally, the Sadog Tasi treatment plant unveiled its new clarifier yesterday—a project that was funded by the EPA.

"Since 2018, CUC has been struggling without a clarifier. [Wastewater crew] had to makeshift the pump, the hoses, and daily pull that across manually. I know it was labor-intensive, very hard work, and since 2018 they've managed to keep the plant running. But today, [with the new clarifier], our Biological Oxygen Demand was 2. That's like 98% removal; it's remarkable. Total suspended solids are also very low. It's such a remarkable task that the operators, engineers, the whole team have come together to achieve this remarkable treatment process. Throughout the United States, plants don't normally achieve that remarkable success in removal of BOD. We've set some clarified water aside and it almost looks like tap water leaving the treatment plant into the ocean. I'm very proud of that," said Kevin O. Watson, CUC deputy executive director for water/wastewater.

Watson said the Sadog Tasi treatment plan has come a long way and he is amazed by the team's accomplishments.

"I started here a year ago, before the construction. … It was a team operation. I'm amazed by the accomplishment, seeing how it was like before and what they have had to work with, and what we've accomplished," he said.

CUC acting executive director Betty Terlaje also acknowledged the men and women who make up the Sadog Tasi treatment plant team, stating that their job is vital in ensuring the safety of the CNMI community and the CNMI environment.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

IPI

From page 1

The hearing was first held at the CCC's conference room at the Springs Plaza Building in Gualo Rai in the morning, but was later moved to the Office of the Governor's conference room on Capital Hill in the afternoon due to online video technical problems.

CCC board vice chair Rafael Demapan, who presided over the hearing, said the public comment will be held at a later date when deliberations begin.

Aside from Demapan, the other commissioners serving as jurors or judges are Ramon Dela Cruz, Mariano Taitano, and Martin T. Mendiola.

Present and were supposedly ready to speak during the public comments portion of the hearing in the morning were Reps. Marissa Renee Flores (Ind-Saipan), Edwin K. Propst (Ind-Saipan), Vincent Aldan (Ind-Saipan), and House vice speaker Rep. Joel Camacho (Ind-Saipan).

IPI counsel Michael Chen, who is in Los Angeles and appeared via online video, informed the board in the afternoon hearing that they are going to call as witness an executive of Japan-based Kyosei Bank Group.

IPI's parent company, the Hong Kong-based Imperial Pacific International Holdings Limited, and Kyosei Bank Group entered into a memorandum of understanding in July 18, 2023, which states that Kyosei will be investing $300 million in IPI's casino/resort project on Saipan.

After completing his examination of CEC executive director Andrew Yeom in relation to the first complaint against IPI, Chen moved to disqualify all commissioners from the case, citing pre-existing bias against IPI. The first complaint refers to IPI's failure to comply with commission order 2020-03 that requires IPI to maintain a payroll in a bank in the CNMI or the United States.

Chen said he does not want to offend the commissioners but he has to make the motion on behalf of his client.

Assistant attorney general Keisha Blaise, who is counsel for Yeom, objected to the motion to disqualify, saying she does not believe the commissioners are biased.

"I do not believe where that bias would come from as the funds were just supposed to be created to ensure that IPI's employees were paid. The commissioners would not receive a dime of that money. So I don't know where this bias would come from," she said.

Chen said it's about the commissioners' personal interest.

He said it's only not about the complaint itself, but about violating the requirements of the CNMI's Administrative Procedures Act, which requires the hearing officer to be impartial.

When *Saipan Tribune* left the hearing late afternoon yesterday, Blaise was questioning Yeom about his second complaint against IPI.

In her opening statements, Blaise said they are here to ensure that the integrity of the gaming industry is upheld and that those entrusted with operating within it do it with the highest standards of compliance and accountability. "Today, you will hear evidence of IPI's violations of commission orders, regulations....These violations are not minor oversights, but significant breaches that reflect the unsuitability of IPI to continue the privilege of being a licensed casino operator," Blaise said.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

DEWEY

From page 1

Heather Barcinas informed Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph Camacho during a status conference yesterday that everything is in place for Dewey's extradition and Allen County Sheriff's Department representatives have already arrived on Saipan to take Dewey back.

Barcinas also filed yesterday an official motion for extradition which the judge acknowledged during the hearing.

According to the motion, on Feb. 22, the prosecution received an electronic copy of Indiana Gov. Eric. J. Holcomb's requisition request and accompanying documents that met all requirements under the CNMI extradition law.

On. Feb. 26, acting governor David M. Apatang signed a warrant of arrest directing the Office of the Attorney General, Department of Public Safety, and other law enforcement agencies to arrest, detain, extradite, and/or convey Dewey to Allen County Sheriff Troy R. Hershberger, or his designated agents.

The documents were served on Dewey on Feb. 27 at the Department of Corrections.

It was confirmed yesterday that Dewey will be extradited back to Allen County this week.

Dewey, who has been going by the alias Widmor since he fled the state of Indiana to Saipan back in 2022, was arrested last Jan. 26 at the Kagman Community Health Center where he works. Dewey allegedly admitted to officers his real name and he was immediately arrested.

He was charged with one count of fugitive from justice and was booked and detained at DOC.

According to court documents, Dewey fled Indiana where he has over six outstanding arrest warrants on multiple cases involving rape, sexual misconduct with minors, sexual battery, child solicitation, possession of child pornography, dissemination of matter harmful to a minor, and more.

The charges against Dewey date as far back as 2020.

During a status conference last Feb. 14, Dewey upheld his innocence stating he is the victim in all these.

KILILI

From page 1

In a video released yesterday by the committee-to-elect Propst, it showed Sablan saying he has decided to endorse and support Propst for the CNMI's delegate post.

Sablan urged voters to support Propst in order to sustain the same programs that he has championed during his terms.

"I think Congressman Propst can carry that torch. I'm asking you please support and vote for Congressman Propst for next United States delegate to Congress," Sablan said.

The video also showed Sablan being greeted and entertained by Propst and his wife, Daisy, at their home.

Sablan will not be seeking a ninth term as delegate.

Propst, who is running under the NMI Democratic Party banner, said yesterday in a statement that he is deeply honored to have Sablan's support.

Propst said Sablan has been the people's champion for eight terms, or 16 years, in the U.S. House of Representatives. He said he is grateful to have a mentor, a role model, and a friend to guide him along this journey.

"It's always been about our people. I will do my very best to continue to put our people first as he has done," Propst said.

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION

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Fax: (670) 234-9021

NUTISIAN PUPBLIKU
(February 27, 2024)

Sigun para i Seksiona 5 A. gi "Northern Marianas Housing Corporation" ("NMHC") i "Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery ("CDBG-DR")" na Prugråman "Action Plan" ("AP"), para u manafanungu' i henerât pupbliku put esti i manmaproponi na "substantial" yan "non-substantial" na amenda siha gi CDBG-DR AP yan para u manå'i i pupbliku tiempu para u fampattisipâo yan i uputunidât para u famanoppi' gi esti i manmaproponi na amenda siha. I henerât pupbliku debi na u ma'intrega hålum i upiñon-ñiha gi halum trenta (30) dihas ginen i fetchan pupblikasion nu esti na Nutisia put esti i tinilaika ni manmaproponi siha gi CDBG-DR AP.

I "substantial" na amenda siha manapriskisu yanggin guaha tinilaika gi halum i prugråman benifisiu/"criteria" i kuålifikâo, "addition/deletion" nu i aktibidât, o sino "reallocation i "substantial amount". I "substantial" na amenda siempri lokkui' prumisisu yanggin kuatkuet na tinilaika siha gi prugråma umupus i singku miyon pesus ($5,000,000). I "substantial" na amenda debi na u pribeni rasonâpbli na uputunidât (maseha 30 dihas) para upiñon pupbliku.

Todu i tinilaika siha debi na u madukumentu ni Prugråman NMHC's CDBG-DR para u pribeni todu i dos nisisâriu yan rasonâpbli na "justification". Todu i "substantial" na amenda siha siempri ingklusu i mantinattiyi:

1. I eksakto na aidentifikasion nu månu na sinahguan manå'yi, mafunas, pat matulaika;
2. Klåru na diskripsion nu ginen månu/para månu i fundu; yan
3. I mås nuebu yan maribisa na "budget" dispues di i "re-allocation" nu i salåppi'.

Gi inâtlabis, i "non-substantial" na amenda siha para i "Action Plan" ti manmasuhetu para påttisipasion siudadanu lâo i NMHC madisidi para u ingklusu i "non-substantial" na amenda para i mamensiona na Plånu gi halum esti na Nutisia para infotmasion ha' na rason siha. Yan mås, todu i "action plan" na amenda siha siempri managuaha gi website i CNMI CDBG-DR gi www.cnmicdbg-dr.com yan siña machuli' kopia gi ufisinan i NMHC yan i CDBG-DR siha ni gaigi iya Saipan, Tinian, yan Luta para etyi siha i ti siña ma'akses i "Internet". I ninatutungu' i pupbliku mampus impottânti sa' esti na fundu dinipendi meggai gi påttisipasion pupbliku yan i tetenan ni ti matakka' nisisita para u ma'ebalua.

I NMHC siempri ma'usa i mantinattiyi na "avenues/outlets" para u manafanungu' i pupbliku put i Prugråman CDBG-DR:

- Nutisia gi halum gaseta
- Anunsiu Rediu • Social media
- CNMI CDBG-DR website

Uttimu, i NMHC siempri ha chuli' rasonâpbli na manera para u na'siguru na i "very low-, low-," yan "moderateincome" na petsona siha, kuntodu i tâotâo ni gai disibilidât, i gai inamku' yan i tâotâo ni "Limited English Proficiency (LEP)" na managuaha akses para u mås makumprendi i prugråma yan parehu na uputunidât para u fampattisipâo gi halum esti impottânti na aktibidât i CDBG-DR ni kumunfotma yan i manmakâtkâtga na "policies" yan "procedures" ni gaigi gi halum i Prugråman CDBG-DR Citizen Participation Plan." I manmamensiona yan kumplidu na "Citizen Participation Plan" siña ma'akses gi website i CNMI CDBG-DR gi: www.cnmi-cdbg-dr.com o sino siña masodda' gi Subsection 4.E.1. Homeowner Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of the CDBG-DR Action Plan (pages 72 - 74), ni ma amenda. I kopian i "Action Plan", komu ma'amenda ginen esti na tinilaika na priniponi siha, siña ma'akses gi website i CNMI CDBG-DR gi: www.cnmi-cdbg-dr.com o sino siña machuli' kopia gi maseha månu na ufisinan i NMHC iya Saipan, Tinian, yan Luta.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Proposed changes are highlighted in yellow. The corresponding page numbers reflect the actual page numbers of the most current action plan, as amended and posted on NMHC's CDBG-DR website at: https://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com/action-plan/action-plan-documents/

SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENT NO. 03
Summary and Modifications

Pursuant to **Subsection 5.D.**[1] , the following proposed modifications shall go into effect after the required 30-day public comment period ends and concurrence from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
The proposed modifications, as presented herein, were prompted by the following reason(s):

1. After close consultation with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD"), the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation "NMHC" (hereinafter referred to as the "Grantee" interchangeably) hereby seeks to assist Non-LMI[2] homeowners whose single and principal dwellings or homes were damaged by qualifying storm(s)[3] under the Urgent Need National Objective;

2. There are still families, bona fide disaster victims, whose total household income exceed the NMHC-CDBG-DR Homeowner Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program's Income Limits schedule and whose homes were destroyed by qualifying storm(s) and remain in disrepair;

3. 13 families have thus far been identified as non-LMI household applicants whose applications were previously denied under NMHC's CDBG-DR Homeowner Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program due to household incomes exceeding the program's Income Limits schedule, and whose homes were destroyed by qualifying disaster(s) and remain in disrepair;

[1] A **substantial amendment** is defined as a change in program benefit or eligibility criteria; the addition or deletion of an activity; or the allocation or reallocation of a monetary threshold specified by the grantee in its action plan. The CNMI monetary threshold for a substantial amendment is any changes in Action Plan amounts that exceed $5 million. Substantial amendments are changes to an Action Plan which require a 30-day public comment period. All amendments will be listed on the CDBG-DR website sequentially.
[2] 80.01% or greater AMI
[3] Presidentially Declared Disasters: 1. Typhoon Mangkhut; and 2. Super Typhoon Yutu

4. 80% ($31,525,626) of NMHC's CDBG-DR Homeowner Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program's total allocation has been set aside to assist an estimated 126 eligible LMI families rehabilitate or reconstruct their storm-damaged homes under the LMI National Objective while the remaining 20% ($7,881,407) will be used to assist 31 eligible Non-LMIs under the Urgent Need National Objective;

5. **Section 1** of **85 FR 4651** provides that "A Grantee may determine where to use the remaining 20 percent of the allocation, but that portion of the allocation may only be used to address unmet disaster needs in those areas that the grantee determines are 'most impacted and distressed' (Municipalities of Saipan and Tinian) and that received a presidential major disaster declaration..." Clearly, unmet disaster needs in these MID areas still exist but NMHC's program Income Limits schedule, which is not required under this particular program, precludes this class of applicants from qualifying for CDBG-DR financial assistance under NMHC's CDBG-DR Homeowner Rehabilitation and Reconstruction program;

6. It has been determined that the current Income Limits schedule for non-LMIs under the Urgent Need National Objective, 80.01% - 120% of the Area Median Income (AMI), needs to be amended in order for NMHC to assist more disaster victims rehabilitate or reconstruct their homes and whose incomes exceed 120% AMI;

7. HUD does not object to this proposed Substantial Amendment but strongly recommends that the thirteen (13) non-LMI applicants who previously applied and were subsequently denied assistance due to their incomes exceeding the program's current Income Limits schedule (80.01% - 120%) under the Urgent Need National Objective and that NMHC has on record to be assisted first;

8. This Substantial Amendment is required to authorize NMHC to modify the program's Income Limits schedule to allow the agency to assist disaster victims, whose total household incomes exceed the program's Income Limits schedule of 120% AMI, repair their homes. Financial Assistance shall be subject to availability of funds.

Pages 73 - 74

g. Target Groups

The program will categorize the target groups by the following income ranges:

TARGET GROUPS	CDBG-DR PROGRAM CNMI-MEDIAN INCOME RANGE	INTEREST RATE	TYPE OF ASSISTANCE
First	0%-30%	~~0%~~ N/A	~~Deferred Loan~~ Grant
Second	30.01% -50%	~~0%~~ N/A	~~75% Deferred Loan and 25% Non Interest Bearing Loan~~ Grant
Third	50.01% - 80%	~~0%~~ N/A	~~50% Deferred Loan and 50% Non Interest Bearing Loan~~ Grant
Fourth	80.01% - 120% or greater	~~0%~~ N/A	~~25% Deferred Loan and 75% Non Interest Bearing Loan~~ Grant (The national objective for this group is urgent need)

Written comments are due by March 28, 2024 and may be faxed to Fax No.: (670) 234-9451, mailed to P.O. Box 500514 Saipan, MP 96950, or emailed to cnmi-cdbg-dr@nmhcgov.net.

"NMHC is an equal employment and fair housing public agency"

Tinian Field Office
Tel: (670)433-9213 | Fax: (670)433-3690

CDBG-DR Office: Tel: (670)233-9447 / 9448/9449

Rota Field Office:
Tel: (670)532-9410 | Fax: (670)532-9441

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION

P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp
Website: http://www.nmhcgov.net
Tels: (670) 234-9447 | 234-6866 | 234-7670
Fax: (670) 234-9021

PUBLIC NOTICE
(February 27, 2024)

Pursuant to Section 5 A. of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation ("NMHC") Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery ("CDBG-DR") Program's Action Plan ("AP"), this is to notify the general public about these proposed substantial and non-substantial amendments to the CDBG-DR AP and afford citizen participation and the opportunity to comment on these proposed amendments.

The general public has thirty (30) days from publication date of this Public Notice to submit comments on these proposed changes to the CDBG-DR AP. Substantial amendments are required when there is a change in program benefit/eligibility criteria, addition/deletion of an activity, or reallocation of substantial amounts.

A substantial amendment will also be required if any program changes exceed five million dollars ($5,000,000). Substantial amendments must provide a reasonable opportunity (at least 30 days) for citizen comment. All changes must be documented by NMHC's CDBG-DR Program to provide both necessary and reasonable justifications. All substantial amendments will include the following:

1. The exact identification of which content is being added, deleted, or changed;
2. A clear description of where funds are moved from/to; and
3. The updated and revised budget after re-allocation of funding.

Conversely, non-substantial amendments to the Action Plan are not subject to citizen participation but NMHC decided to include a non-substantial amendment to the said Plan in this Public Notice for informational purposes only. Furthermore, all action plan amendments will be available via the CNMI CDBG-DR website at www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com and hardcopies may be obtained at any of the NMHC central and CDBG-DR offices located on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota by those who do not have access to the Internet. Notifying the public is of paramount importance as these funds are largely dependent on public participation and the remaining unmet need to be assessed. NMHC will utilize the following avenues/outlets to notify the public of the CDBG-DR Program:

- Notices in the local newspaper
- Radio announcements
- Social media
- CNMI CDBG-DR website

Last, NMHC will take reasonable steps to ensure very low-, low-, and moderate-income persons, including persons with disabilities, the elderly and persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) have meaningful access and an equal opportunity to participate in this important CDBG-DR activity and in accordance to prescribed policies and procedures embedded in the CDBG-DR Program's Citizen Participation Plan. The aforesaid and complete Citizen Participation Plan may be accessed at the CNMI CDBG-DR website: www.cnmi-cdbg-dr.com or found at Subsection 4.E.1. Homeowner Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of the CDBG-DR Action Plan (pages 72 - 74), as amended. A copy of the Action Plan, as amended by these proposed changes, may be accessed at the CNMI CDBG-DR website at: www.cnmi-cdbg-dr.com or obtained at any of the NMHC offices on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Proposed changes are highlighted in yellow. The corresponding page numbers reflect the actual page numbers of the most current action plan, as amended and posted on NMHC's CDBG-DR website at: https://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com/action-plan/action-plan-documents/

SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENT NO. 03
Summary and Modifications

Pursuant to **Subsection 5.D.**[1] , the following proposed modifications shall go into effect after the required 30-day public comment period ends and concurrence from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The proposed modifications, as presented herein, were prompted by the following reason(s):

1. After close consultation with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD"), the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation "NMHC" (hereinafter referred to as the "Grantee" interchangeably) hereby seeks to assist Non-LMI[2] homeowners whose single and principal dwellings or homes were damaged by qualifying storm(s)[3] under the Urgent Need National Objective;

2. There are still families, bona fide disaster victims, whose total household income exceed the NMHC-CDBG-DR Homeowner Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program's Income Limits schedule and whose homes were destroyed by qualifying storm(s) and remain in disrepair;

3. 13 families have thus far been identified as non-LMI household applicants whose applications were previously denied under NMHC's CDBG-DR Homeowner Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program due to household incomes exceeding the program's Income Limits schedule, and whose homes were destroyed by qualifying disaster(s) and remain in disrepair;

4. 80% ($31,525,626) of NMHC's CDBG-DR Homeowner Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program's total allocation has been set aside to assist an estimated 126 eligible LMI families rehabilitate or reconstruct their storm-damaged homes under the LMI National Objective while the remaining 20% ($7,881,407) will be used to assist 31 eligible Non-LMIs under the Urgent Need National Objective;

5. **Section 1** of **85 FR 4651** provides that "A Grantee may determine where to use the remaining 20 percent of the allocation, but that portion of the allocation may only be used to address unmet disaster needs in those areas that the grantee determines are 'most impacted and distressed' (Municipalities of Saipan and Tinian) and that received a presidential major disaster declaration..." Clearly, unmet disaster needs in these MID areas still exist but NMHC's program Income Limits schedule, which is not required under this particular program, precludes this class of applicants from qualifying for CDBG-DR financial assistance under NMHC's CDBG-DR Homeowner Rehabilitation and Reconstruction program;

[1] A **substantial amendment** is defined as a change in program benefit or eligibility criteria; the addition or deletion of an activity; or the allocation or reallocation of a monetary threshold specified by the grantee in its action plan. The CNMI monetary threshold for a substantial amendment is any changes in Action Plan amounts that exceed $5 million. Substantial amendments are changes to an Action Plan which require a 30-day public comment period. All amendments will be listed on the CDBG-DR website sequentially.
[2] 80.01% or greater AMI
[3] Presidentially Declared Disasters: 1. Typhoon Mangkhut; and 2. Super Typhoon Yutu

6. It has been determined that the current Income Limits schedule for non-LMIs under the Urgent Need National Objective, 80.01% - 120% of the Area Median Income (AMI), needs to be amended in order for NMHC to assist more disaster victims rehabilitate or reconstruct their homes and whose incomes exceed 120% AMI;

7. HUD does not object to this proposed Substantial Amendment but strongly recommends that the thirteen (13) non-LMI applicants who previously applied and were subsequently denied assistance due to their incomes exceeding the program's current Income Limits schedule (80.01% - 120%) set under the Urgent Need National Objective and that NMHC has on record to be assisted first;

8. This Substantial Amendment is required to authorize NMHC to modify the program's Income Limits schedule to allow the agency to assist disaster victims, whose total household incomes exceed the program's Income Limits schedule of 120% AMI, repair their homes. Financial Assistance shall be subject to availability of funds.

Pages 73 - 74

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Written comments are due by March 28, 2024 and may be faxed to Fax No.: (670) 234-9451, mailed to P.O. Box 500514 Saipan, MP 96950, or emailed to cnmi-cdbg-dr@nmhcgov.net.

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Rota Field Office:
Tel: (670)532-9410 | Fax: (670)532-9441

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
CUC-RFP-24-014
PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION OF A NEW 2MW GENSET UNIT FOR ROTA POWER PLANT

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed proposals from qualified Contractors or Vendors for the purchase and installation of a new genset for the Rota Power Plant located in Songsong, Rota. The purchase of and installation of the new genset with approximately 2MW of total net output will improve CUC current power generation capacity needed to sustain critical electrical services to the community of Rota.

The RFP Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration for one RFP package set. Prospective proposers must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division by **March 8, 2024** to be considered.

A Pre-proposal Conference will be held on **February 22, 2024 at 9:00 AM (CHST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and five (5) hard copies of your submission must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-RFP-24-014, Purchase and Installation of a 2MW New Genset Unit for the Rota Power Plant"** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 A.M.(ChST) on March 19, 2024.** Proposals mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before the due date and time.

All Offerors are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the Offeror due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a proposal or supply under the contract.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible proposers for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of, and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. Proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment. There shall be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing proposers.

All responses to this RFP should take into account any and all taxes which will become the obligation of the proposer awarded a contract.

This Request for Proposal does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals in anticipation of a contract. This request and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations. The contractor shall be required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 27, 2024,** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org, with a copy to Alvin King, CUC Rota Resident Manager at alvin.king@cucgov.org, Richard Cano, CUC Power Generation Manager at richard.cano@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, Senior Administrative Technician at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
CUC-RFP-24-011
DEBT COLLECTION LEGAL SERVICES

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed proposals from qualified and experienced entities for Debt Collection Legal Services.

The RFP Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one RFP package set. Perspective Entities must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply.

One (1) original and five (5) hard copies of your submission must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-RFP-24-011, Debt Collection Legal Services"** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 A.M.(ChST) on March 15, 2024,** Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. All proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity for discussion. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing proposers.

All Proposers are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the Proposer due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a proposal or supply under the contract. The RFP does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the proposal under this request, or to procure or contract for services. The Proposers are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 23, 2024,** to Manny Sablan, CUC's Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Bettina G. Terlaje, CUC's Chief of Administration via email betty.terlaje@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, CUC's Senior Administrative Technician via email address marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Four graduate from Family Self-Sufficiency Program of NMHC

The Northern Marianas Housing Corp.'s board of directors, management, and staff presented four graduates—Louisa L. Taga, Narcely Martin, Marline Anson, and Rose Marie A. Borja—certificates of completion under the NMHC's Family Self-Sufficiency Program.

Director Vinney Atalig-Hocog presented each individual graduate with their certificates of completion. Director Oscar M. Babauta commended each of the graduates for their outstanding achievement and emphasized to each graduate to not lose that initiative and hard work it took for them to become self-sufficient so that they can continue to prosper without the need of any temporary programs in the future. Chairwoman "Marcie" M. Tomokane reiterated those sentiments and asked each graduate to share their stories with others in the community and to allow NMHC to publicly share a little bit of their story to the public so that others can benefit from the FSS Program to change their lives like they have.

NMHC continues to encourage Housing Choice Voucher participants to voluntarily enroll in the FSS Program to avail of assistance such as job placement, obtaining GED, learning crafts and trades, etc. to better their lives and become less dependent on federal subsidies/assistance.

Taga expressed, "It's a wonderful feeling when you know you've accomplished something you never thought you could. It's like winning an award or something but just better." She applied for the FSS program in 2016 as a single family of four with a goal of finding a job so she and her family can have a better life. In 2017, she was able to secure work at Sablan Topline Agency and in 2020 she welcomed her husband to the family.

Martin participated in the FSS program in May 2016 as a family of six. Her goal was to find a job and set up her family for a better life. She found employment with Saipan World Resort in September 2016 and is currently with the same company to this day. She stated, "I want to thank the NMHC program and is deeply honored to receive this award after 5-7 years because of joining." She also wanted to express her thanks to her FSS coordinator who helped her throughout the process of the program.

Anson started as a single mother of three receiving assistance in 2008. She was able to focus on the needs of her children and push them educationally. Today her eldest child is a high school graduate and a married woman, another daughter has completed her associate degree and starting her bachelor's degree at Northern Marianas College, and a son who is doing well as a high school junior. She started the FSS program in 2016 and was able to secure employment with Sablan Topline Agency in 2017. "I want to thank my FSS coordinator for encouraging me to get into the program, and thank my caseworker for mentioning this program to me and encouraging me to register. I think this is a wonderful program that motivates people to work and know that there is a reward waiting for you in the end."

Borja moved back to Saipan from Guam as a family of nine. She was able to receive assistance through NMHC with the help of her caseworker that

See NMHC on Page 7

Commonwealth Zoning Board Meeting

March 07, 2024 | 2:00 PM
Governor's Office Conference Room
Capitol Hill, Saipan
Tel: 670-234-9661/2 • Fax: 670-234-9666

AGENDA

A. Preliminary Matters
1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. Adoption of Minutes – February 8, 2024
5. Communications
6. Public Comments

B. Public Hearings
1. None

C. Old Business
1. Board decision on ZONING BOARD RESOLUTION NO. 2023-12-05; To impose conditions on the Rezone process
   i. Commencement of development within six months after adoption
   ii. Reversal to original district upon failure to meet term of development
2. Nuisance Abatement and Blighted Properties Maintenance Act of 2018 Regulations

D. New Business
1. Proposed Text Amendments to the Saipan Zoning Law of 2013

E. Report from Zoning Administrator
1. Operations (Permitting & Enforcement)
2. Financial
3. Updates:
   i. Zoning's Clean-Healthy-Attractive-Safe Campaign

F. Report from Legal Counsel
G. Executive Session
H. Announcements
I. Adjournment

/s/Henry Hofschneider, Chairman

Commonwealth Zoning Board

ZONING OFFICE
Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel. 670-234-9661/2/3, FAX 234-9666
zoningboard@cnmizoning.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

Text Amendment to the Saipan Zoning Law of 2013

Pursuant to **Section 7242 of the Zoning Code**, this is to inform the public that the following amendments to the Saipan Zoning Law of 2013 had been approved and determined effective by all members of the Commonwealth Zoning Board through corresponding Resolutions, during its **January 04, 2024** regular meeting:

Zoning Board Resolution 2023-12-02A:

a. To include "**Cannabis Manufacturing and Processing**" in Table 1 of Article 4 as Conditional Use within the Rural, Village Commercial, Mixed Commercial, and Industrial zoning districts.

Zoning Board Resolution 2023-12-02B:

a. To include "**Furniture Stores**" in Table 1 of Article 4 as Permitted Use within the Village Commercial, Mixed Commercial, Industrial, Garapan Core, Garapan East, and Beach Road zoning districts.

/s/
Henry S. Hofschneider, Board Chairman

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Family Self-Sufficiency Program graduates Louisa L. Taga, Narcely Martin, Marline Anson, and Rose Marie A. Borja pose with Northern Marianas Housing Corp. board of directors, corporate director, deputy corporate director, and staff.

NMHC

From page 6

guided her through an array of programs available. She took the initiative to apply for the FSS program and was referred to her FSS coordinator by her caseworker and joined in 2019. She was able to find employment in 2019 with an insurance company and in 2021 was able to gain employment with the CNMI government at Commonwealth COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program. In 2024 she added her husband into her household. "In reflecting on my journey, I couldn't help but express gratitude to my caseworker and FSS coordinator for their unwavering support and assistance throughout my time in the program. Their dedication made the experience more than just a financial endeavor; it became a journey of personal growth and stability."

The FSS Program is a voluntary program designed to assist families in becoming economically dependent. With the support of local agencies, FSS combines case management, education, job training, and ongoing support to aid the family in improving their lives and to achieve complete financial independence within 5-7 years. The main requirements are the desire to become self-sufficient and a commitment to take the steps necessary to make this happen. Eligible participants are those who are currently receiving rental assistance through the Housing Choice Voucher Program and are the head of household and 18 years of age or older. A great benefit to the FSS Program is that recipients, who pay a rent share, receive an interest-bearing escrow account. The account accrues as the household's portion accrues as the household's portion of rent increases because of an increase in earned income. The account is held until the participant successfully completes the contract.

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-015

A-16 SEWER LIFT STATION UPGRADE

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the construction of the A-16 Sewer Lift Station Upgrade project in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists of the installation of a new polymer pre-cast concrete wet well to replace the existing A-16 wet well; installation of OFCI submersible pumps and accessories; new aboveground valve station and appurtenances with concrete pad; installation of new bar screen to replace existing A-1 bar screen; rehabilitation of existing A-16 bar screen; installation of new gravity sewer mains and manholes; installation of H2S controls; reconnection to existing lift station force main; procurement of a portable pumping system with trailer and concrete pad; installation of temporary bypass pumping operations and dewatering; site improvements with new chain-link fence, two vehicular gates and a pedestrian gate; asphaltic concrete pavement driveways with partial compacted base course area; installation of new and replacement of existing gate valves; demolition of existing minor structures and electrical upgrade. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system. CUC requires the Project to be completed in **Two Hundred Seventy (270) calendar days** from date of award of contract.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on **February 27, 2024 at 10:00 AM (CHST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "**CUC-IFB-24-015, A-16 SEWER LIFT STATION UPGRADE**" to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (CHST) March 14, 2024**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A *Bid Guarantee* of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States, Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidder. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 (ChST) on March 1, 2024** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email at manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Ms. Nicolette Villagomez, CUC's Water/Wastewater Engineer – via email at nicolette.villagomez@cucgov.org, and Ms. Christie L. Sablan, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician – via email at christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

new wave dental

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Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-020

SUPPLY & DELIVERY OF LUBE OILS FOR POWER GENERATION
(CUC SAIPAN, TINIAN, ROTA)

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the supply and delivery of engine lubricating oils for CUC Power Generation facilities on Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

The IFB Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set. The IFB package consisting of the specifications and scope-of-service will be provided via email to the registered email ID. Prospective bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division.

One (1) original and five (5) hard copies, in a sealed envelope marked *"CUC-IFB-24-020, Supply & Delivery of Lube Oils for Power Generation"* to the **CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building,** P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **March 11, 2024 at 10:00 AM (ChST).** An electronic copy should also be emailed to Marcela Tenorio via email, marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

All Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility for any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements during the Contractor's preparation of a bid or supply under the contract. The IFB does not commit CUC to award a contract, pay any cost incurred in preparing the bid under this request, procure or contract for services. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations. The contract may be subject to the approval of CPUC and will not be effective until receipt of such approval.

All responses to this IFB should consider all taxes, including excise tax, which will become the proponent's obligation upon award of a contract. Successful proponents must submit a copy of a valid CNMI Business license in compliance with the Contractor's Registration and Licensing Laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, upon award of the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on March 5, 2024** to Manny B. Sablan, Jr., CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Richard Cano, CUC Power Generation Manager via email richard.cano@cucgov.org, and Marcela Tenorio, email address marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and to waive any defects in said bid, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN, JR.
Purchasing Administrator

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 43

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

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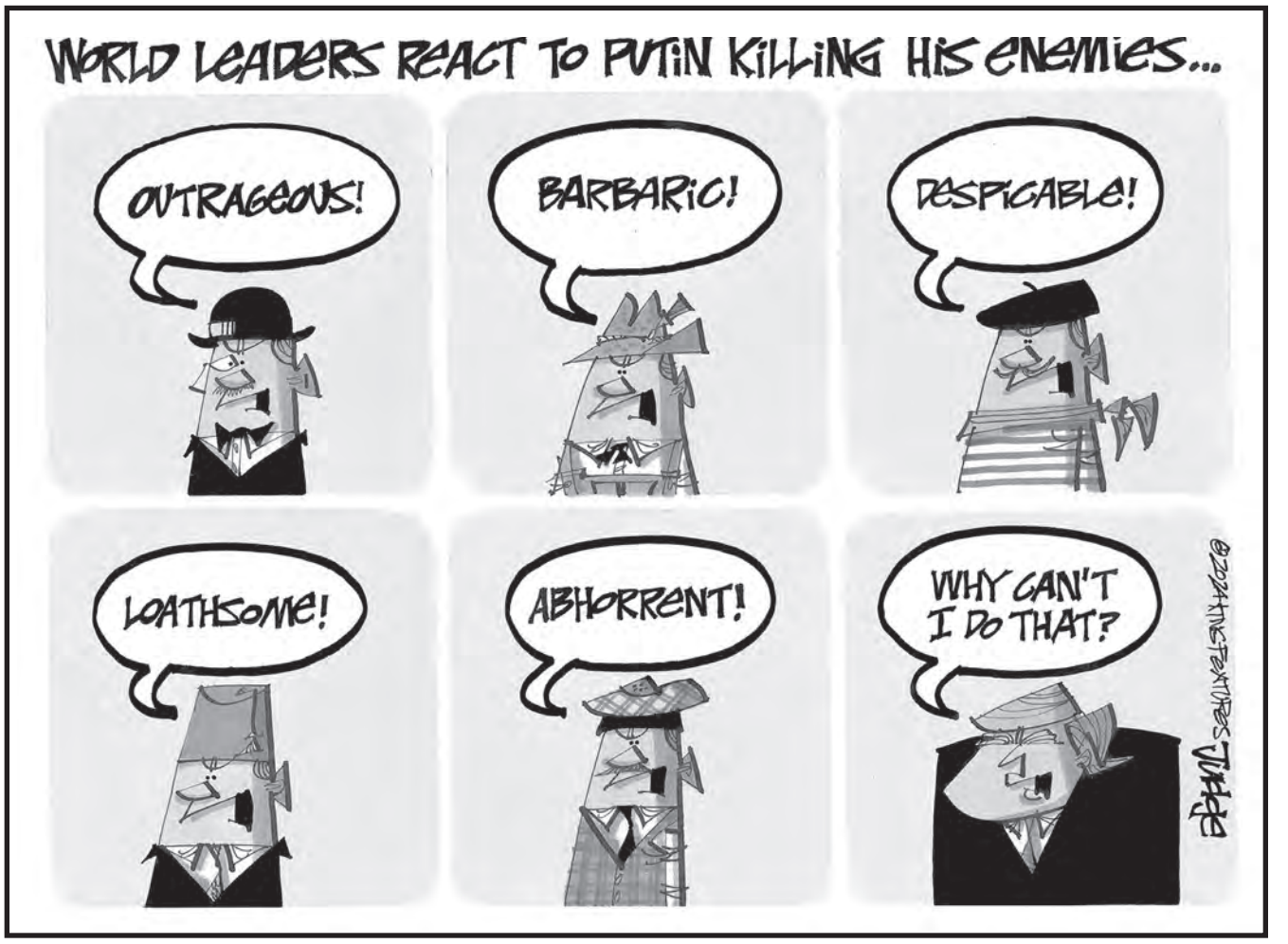

EDITORIAL

Failing this college test: A 'better' FAFSA is making financial aid much worse

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is known by high school seniors, college students and their parents, as well as everyone else by its acronym, FAFSA.

As its name says, there is no fee to fill out the online FAFSA form to become eligible for college scholarship and aid money, but this year it is imposing a high cost on families and colleges. And the culprit is the United States Department of Education, which runs the program.

Colleges around the country are in the blind about who can pay how much to attend next fall.

We know FAFSA well, having filled it out since before COVID and are now suffering through its new and improved version as mandated by the Congress when lawmakers passed the FAFSA Simplification Act in December 2020.

The goal was to have fewer questions about assets and income. But instead the outcome has a huge mess as what had been a matter of days to have the forms processed has become much longer.

Without the info on how much students and their families can afford, colleges can't make decisions on admission and aid packages for students they offer spots to. Matriculating and continuing students are likewise stuck, as financial aid is reviewed annually.

Before they "simplified" this year, each new FAFSA season began on Oct. 1 every year. We went back and looked at the FAFSA we completed last year and found these messages emailed from StudentAid.gov.

Oct. 16, 2022: "We Received Your FAFSA Form. Take Steps to Prepare to Pay for School." That came moments after the final steps on our end were completed, which included answering all the questions about farm income, bank accounts and investments and granting the IRS permission to send tax return data to the FAFSA.

Oct. 18, 2022: "Processed Successfully: Your Child's 2023-24 FAFSA Form." So two days was all it took for the feds to evaluate the info and prepare a report to send to the colleges for which aid was being sought. Some years it was a day or two longer, but always less than a week. And since the process opened on Oct. 1, getting needed material from FAFSA to colleges in a timely fashion was never an issue.

Under the new regime, FAFSA didn't begin until Dec. 31, three months later than before. From what we read, trying to log on during New Year's Eve was a nightmare, so we gave it some time before we attempted.

When we began the process Jan. 17, it was a bit balky, but it seemed to work and like usual, we had to complete it over a few sessions, having to gather all the required data. We finished the FAFSA on Jan. 28, but didn't really notice

See FAILING on Page 9

We must close the digital divide in America

By MEKA EGWUEKWE
Chicago Tribune

Meka Egwuekwe is executive director of CodeCrew, a nonprofit that empowers youths and adults from underrepresented communities to be tech innovators.

According to a 2023 article in Forbes, 42 million Americans have no access to broadband. In our interconnected world, lack of broadband feeds the digital divide, and if you think that doesn't affect you, well, you're wrong.

I am talking to you, the Midwestern farmer, the single mother of three in Chicago, the family-man rancher in Texas, the free-spirited woman in Vermont, the high-flying executive in New York, the hardworking immigrant in New Mexico, the coal miner in Kentucky, the snowbird in Florida, the artist in San Francisco and the homeowner in every American suburb.

Stereotypes like these aside, closing the digital divide is an imperative that demands the attention of every individual. By focusing on closing this divide for all households, we pave the way for a safer, more prosperous and united society. Embracing this endeavor benefits America, as it strengthens national security, enhances public safety, reduces dependence on government support, promotes personal freedom and drives economic growth. Uniting in the vision of empowering all families through digital inclusion should matter to you because it benefits you and our nation as a whole.

Ensuring that all families have access to broadband internet and digital skills bolsters our national security. A digitally connected population is more resilient against cyber threats and disinformation campaigns that can undermine our economy and our democratic processes. A digitally connected America fortifies our nation's defenses, ensuring the safety of our critical infrastructure and sensitive information.

Access to digital resources empowers communities to stay informed about local safety initiatives, emergency services and crime prevention efforts. Digital connectivity facilitates quicker communication with law enforcement and access to public safety resources, fostering safer neighborhoods for all residents.

Bridging the digital divide offers a pathway for families to become more self-reliant and reduce dependence on government assistance. Access to digital education and online job opportunities empowers individuals to seek better economic prospects, improve their skills and pursue gainful employment. As families grow more self-sufficient, they contribute to a stronger economy and reduce the burden on social support programs, ultimately benefiting our entire nation.

And think about this: Promoting digital inclusion for all actually advances personal freedom for everyone. In an increasingly digital world, access to information, education and communication is essential to personal liberty. Empowering communities with digital tools allows residents to exercise their right to access information, express their views and engage in online discourse.

To achieve these significant milestones, we must confront specific challenges head-on. The lack of physical infrastructure continues to plague remote and underserved regions, both in terms of broadband availability and access to connected devices. It is imperative that we champion the equitable implementation of federal infrastructure programs such as the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program and the Digital Equity Act.

The fallacy of pitting rural against urban must be rejected; these two sides are not at odds but rather united in the pursuit of a digitally connected nation. Affordability remains a significant hurdle, underscoring the need to reinforce programs such as the Affordable Connectivity Program.

As affordable access and connected devices are secured, the challenge of effective use comes to the fore. Investment in digital literacy, digital skills and digital education programs is crucial. The nurturing of these competencies, particularly through community institutions such as libraries, schools and community centers, holds the key to empowering individuals with the tools they need for the digital era.

Moreover, recognizing the impact of factors such as age and language barriers is pivotal. Intergenerational learning initiatives can bridge gaps in families and communities, fostering an environment of mutual digital growth. Simultaneously, the creation of multilingual online resources and training materials acknowledges the diverse linguistic and cultural tapestry of our nation.

When the day comes when there is no digital divide, fostering a more united economy everyone benefits from, our country will propel into incredible economic growth. By empowering all communities with digital skills, we unlock a wealth of untapped talent, creativity and entrepreneurship. As families actively participate in the digital economy, they contribute to job creation, innovation and economic diversification.

Embracing digital inclusion is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic investment in the future of our nation. Let us stand united in the pursuit of empowering families, creating a stronger, safer and more prosperous America for all its citizens.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Is your cat bad? The problem is likely not with Fluffy—it could be you

By MIKEL MARIA DELGADO
Los Angeles Times

Mikel Maria Delgado is a scientist and writer based in Sacramento and the author of the forthcoming book Play With Your Cat! The Essential Guide to Interactive Play for a Happier, Healthier Feline.

When I started working with cats almost 25 years ago, it was purely out of self-interest. My own cat, Kittums, had recently passed away. I decided to volunteer at a local animal shelter to get more hands-on feline time: I was mourning and needed more cats in my life. There was plenty of instant gratification to be found at San Francisco's Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals—cuddling with purring cats and playing with frisky kittens. These individuals had no problems finding new homes.

But there was another population at the shelter, the cats who were not coping well with the transition to shelter life. The ones who had lost their homes and were now hiding and hissing and didn't want to cuddle: the "behavior cats," as they were called. When I learned about them, I realized my calling at the shelter was not to meet my own needs but to meet theirs.

There was no instant gratification from these animals, but working with them ended up being the most rewarding part of the shelter experience. Their rehabilitation required a hefty amount of patience and time (not to mention gentle handling, treats and play). The good news is that we were consistently able to find them new homes where they could blossom.

But it's not just finding a cat a home that matters—we must ensure that they stay in those homes. Cats often end up in shelters because of behavior: Fear, aggression or house soiling can be intolerable for humans. I became motivated to learn everything I could about cats so that I could help keep them out of the shelter: I decided to become a cat behavior consultant.

Before long, I found myself in the living room of my first clients. They were an engaged couple who had recently blended families—Jennifer with her elderly cat, Simon, and John with his energetic puppy, Chip. To say it wasn't going well was an understatement, as Simon was peeing on the couch and didn't want anything to do with Chip.

As I chatted with them to get more information, I noticed that John was avoiding eye contact with me. He sat slouched with his arms crossed. A few minutes into our conversation, he stormed out of the room.

"He wants me to put Simon to sleep," Jennifer whispered, tears welling up in her eyes. In fact, I felt a bit like crying myself. Was I in over my head? Should I just tell her to dump John?

DREAMTIME

Although our cats can't directly tell us what's bothering them, we can learn a lot by carefully observing them. From there, we can better interpret what a cat's behavior is saying, and as a result, have a better relationship with the animal.

After the moment of panic dissipated, I realized the stakes were high. I was able to help Jennifer identify changes to the environment she could make, including moving the litter boxes to places where Simon felt safe. Adding pet stairs would allow Simon access to high spots where he could get away from Chip. I referred her to a reputable dog trainer who could help Chip be a happy and polite puppy, and we came up with a plan to shower both pets with treats when they were together to help them build positive associations with each other.

Since then, I've worked with hundreds of cat owners and seen it all: couples breaking up or sleeping in separate beds because of their cats; folks afraid to have guests over because their home smells like cat pee; sleep-deprived humans with a cat who keeps them up all night.

I realized that even though many of these people had lived with cats their whole lives, they often didn't know much about the species. Cats have instincts to scratch, climb, hide, hunt and eliminate in a clean space. They can be territorial and wary of newcomers. These instincts can cause conflict when we don't give our cats acceptable outlets, such as sturdy scratching posts, cat trees, hiding spots and clean litter boxes. And when we try to introduce them to another pet too quickly, the fur may literally fly.

When pet parents know what makes our cats happy, we know how to provide a healthy environment for them. Although our cats can't directly tell us what's bothering them, we can learn a lot by carefully observing them. From there, we can better interpret what a cat's behavior is saying, and as a result, have a better relationship with the animal.

A few years after I met Jennifer and John, they came to the same San Francisco shelter where I began this work. They were happily married and were looking for a new cat to adopt. Simon had recently died of old age. Things had turned out so well with him and Chip that the couple felt prepared to introduce another cat into their home. It was a much better ending than I ever could have expected when I was sitting in their living room that first afternoon.

When I started on this path, my only goal was to help cats. That's what gets me out of bed every morning and what gives my life meaning. It took me a little longer to realize how much this work actually helps humans too.

NRA's LaPierre has to pay. Too bad it's not for all the deaths

By FRANCIS WILKINSON
Bloomberg Opinion

Francis Wilkinson is a Bloomberg Opinion *columnist covering US politics and policy. Previously, he was executive editor for the* Week *and a writer for* Rolling Stone.

When a New York jury delivered a verdict Friday evening against the National Rifle Association and its longtime leader, Wayne LaPierre, my first thoughts were oddly not about the NRA or all the lives destroyed by the gunplay that the organization did so much to foster. I didn't think of the hundreds of thousands of Americans who died by suicide, pulling the trigger on a gun that LaPierre had so desperately urged them to buy (to keep them safe from harm). Instead, I thought about the elephant that LaPierre encountered in Africa, and how the animal provided a capstone to LaPierre's morbid career.

LaPierre, who resigned earlier this year, was found liable for $5.4 million in damages, a result of his years of extravagant grifting, in which he diverted the dues of NRA members, either directly or through intermediaries, to his own luxury vacations, private jet trips and a tailored Italian wardrobe that would shame a Hollywood clotheshorse.

LaPierre never pulled the trigger on his victims. He employed propaganda, fear and politics to shape the most depraved gun laws, and the most deadly gun culture, in the quasi-civilized world.

The case of the elephant, however, was different. A video depicts LaPierre walking through the scrublands of Botswana, his white guide at his side, a cast of locals along to cater to his wants. LaPierre approaches the elephant, who appears no more than a couple dozen feet away. This time, following the guide's direction, LaPierre pulls his own trigger. The elephant is hit.

"Did we get it?" LaPierre asks. It's the first indication of LaPierre's disconnection from the reality around him. "He's down," his guide assures him. Someone laughs.

LaPierre then reloads, so he can shoot the elephant again, this time at closer range. He is gunning for peak vacation. They approach the downed animal. "I'm going to point for you where to shoot," the guide tells LaPierre. LaPierre makes no decisions, exerts no authority. He does what he is told, childlike.

With the wounded elephant before him, what LaPierre is told is this: "Aim low." LaPierre shoots. The chyron on the video conveys the result: "LaPierre shoots the elephant in the wrong place." Bumbling, incompetent, fumbling with the lethal device that he has fashioned into an object of worship, LaPierre has failed to deliver the kill shot.

This is where I stop the video. I've seen it before, and from this point on it only gets harder to bear. LaPierre misfires yet again. The guide tries to disguise his impatience. The animal's suffering continues.

The video depicts an idiot on the loose with a gun. And what could be a more apt tribute to LaPierre's decadeslong NRA reign than that? With LaPierre's encouragement and assistance, tens of thousands of dimwits, drunks, rage-a-holics, paranoids, domestic abusers and everyday incompetents have been armed and sent into America's streets, ballparks, schools, churches and bars. The resulting carnage is everywhere.

LaPierre's alchemy of professional success and moral idiocy has helped rip families and communities to shreds from coast to coast. His comeuppance in a New York courtroom, long overdue, resembles nothing like justice. It's just dollars. A man who siphoned millions now has to return millions. The lives that LaPierre stole won't be so easily replaced.

LaPierre must pay a fine for getting caught at the tail end of a long, lucrative grift. The more serious offenses on his ledger, however, are not the stuff of Caribbean seas and Zegna suits. They more closely resemble the work of madmen and monsters.

FAILING

From page 8

if it was easier than before.

What we did notice was that there's been nothing since. Logging in yesterday shows the Jan. 28 submission and now, nearly a month later, still not processed.

FAFSA did ask to "Please rate your overall satisfaction with StudentAid.gov." We gave it the lowest possible score.

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Wholesome Meals For Lent

Friday spots to dine this Lenten season

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
SPECIAL TO SAIPAN TRIBUNE

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Between now and Easter Sunday, many Catholic devotees will be observing the traditional meat-free diet every Friday. That's a total of five Fridays in the entire month of March when Catholics will be on the lookout for meatless meals.

The official start of the Catholic Church's observance of the Lenten season, Ash Wednesday, fell on another event this year, Valentine's Day, and will end come Easter Sunday, March 31.

That means between now and Easter Sunday, many Catholic devotees will be observing the traditional meat-free diet every Friday. That's a total of five Fridays in the entire month of March when Catholics will be on the lookout for meatless meals.

That adherence to Catholic teaching no longer means you can only enjoy a meatless meal at home. Many restaurants in the CNMI offer varied options that highlight their dishes that are meat-free or menu items that allow the Catholic faithful to enjoy eating out while restricting their food to those that conform to the canons of the Lenten season.

For those hankering for a fast food option, there is the McDonald's Filet-o-Fish, which is always a standout year-round, whether it's the Lenten season or not. The fish filet, fried and breaded and with a generous dollop of tartar sauce, is considered one of the healthier sandwiches in fast food and, according to their corporate website, has been a McDonald's staple since 1965.

The Great Harvest Bread bakery on Saipan offers a wide selection of sandwiches, salads, and a wrap that's especially prepared for the Lenten season and ensures that you get to enjoy all your Friday meals—breakfast, lunch, and dinner—even when you skip meat.

You can start your Fridays with a breakfast of Harvest Veggie Sandwich or a Veggie 3-Seed Hummus that are perfect when paired with your choice of a morning picker-upper, whether that's hot coffee or a steaming mug tea.

A Shrimp-Smoked Wrap or an Egg Salad Sandwich makes for a tummy-filling mid-morning snack, while a Greek Salad and a Veggie Baja Sandwich are a great tandem for a lunch that doesn't skimp on the flavor. A Tuna Salad Sandwich in the afternoon makes for a light yet filling snack, while a Roasted Carrot Tahini Salad paired with a Veggie 3-Seed Hummus for dinner rounds out a whole day of tasty and nutritious food that still allows you to observe Lent. As you can see, you can build your meatless Fridays around these carefully selected items where you can still have your fill of yummy food while being true to the Catholic Church's teachings.

At the nearby Surf Club restaurant, their varied menu offers options for those who want to go meat-free. They have a Fresh Lumpia, Tuna Poke, or Flamin' Shrimp. And that's just for the appetizers! The Surf Club menu has a whole page called "Specialty from the Sea" that features—you guessed it!—seafoods galore that range from a Grilled Salmon, Escabeche Parrot Fish, and Pad Thai Shrimp, to Fish & Chips and Salt & Pepper Shrimp, and even pasta dishes like Crab Meat Pasta and Squid Ink Pasta. One of their lunch specials is Eskabeche with Grilled Salmon or Mahi-mahi. Really, when it comes to the Surf Club menu, you will have so many choices that it wouldn't feel like you are depriving yourself of anything by not eating meat.

Beyond these three restaurants on Saipan, the food scene in the CNMI is so attuned to the varied tastes of its many tourists that they have designed their menus around the idea that each and everyone has a different taste and varying goals when it comes to food, and are ready with a line of food that caters to most tastes. That means eating out no longer means being restricted to just a bowl of soup, a small salad, or just a glass of water. There is almost a little of everything for everyone, and this Lenten season is no exception.

Sacrificing meat on Fridays during Lent doesn't mean sacrificing flavor

By GRETCHEN MCKAY
PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

What to serve for dinner on Fridays during Lent can prove something of a head-scratcher if you want to refrain from eating meat, but are not a fan of baked or fried seafood dishes.

Sure, you can order pizza or fill up on grilled cheese sandwiches, but that can get pretty old pretty quick. That's especially the case when there's so many wonderful plant-based dishes that are not only inexpensive and easy to whip up in short order, but just as filling as a meal centered around meat.

The recipes below offer two examples.

The first takes a favorite Pittsburgh fish-fry side dish—potato-and-cheese pierogies—and deconstructs it into a filling, stick-to-your ribs casserole. The second is an easy, gently spiced onion-and-tomato curry that features chickpeas simmered in a fragrant blend of herbs and warming spices.

Both are made in one pan or pot, making for easy cleanup.

Deconstructed Pierogi Casserole

This easy casserole boasts all the great flavors of an onion-and-cheese pierogi, but none of the hassle of having to make dough from scratch, roll it out and stuff into dumplings. It's adapted from a recipe created by celebrity chef Michael Symon, whose mother grew up in Monessen, for the Food Network.

Symon's original recipe calls for farmers' cheese, a semi-soft curd-like cheese with a mild, milky flavor. I substituted cottage cheese, which is a lot easier to find in your average grocery store. I also omitted bacon to make it vegetarian and used lasagna noodles instead of homemade pierogi dough.

Be sure to let the casserole dish rest for at least 15 minutes before cutting it into slices. Otherwise, you'll end up with a soupy mess on the plate.

12 lasagna noodles
2 pounds russet potatoes, peeled and cut into large chunks
Kosher salt and black pepper, to taste
1 cup heavy cream, heated until hot
8 tablespoons cold butter, cubed
1/4 cup chopped chives, some reserved for garnish
1 tablespoon olive oil
3 large yellow onions, thinly sliced
1 1/2 cups shredded Gruyère or Swiss cheese
1 1/2 cups cottage cheese

Sour cream, for garnish

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Cook lasagna noodles in boiling water for 8 to 10 minutes. Drain noodles and rinse with cold water.

Prepare filling: Put the potatoes in a large pot and cover with 2 inches of cold water. Bring to a boil. Season the water generously with salt. Reduce the heat to maintain a simmer and cook until a knife easily pierces the potatoes, about 10 minutes.

Drain and return the potatoes to the pot. Mash, slowly mixing in the hot cream and cold butter. Stir in chopped chives, then season with salt and pepper to taste and set aside.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Butter a 13-by-9-inch casserole dish or metal pan.

In large pan, heat olive oil and add sliced onions. Toss to coat and season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring frequently, until the onions are caramelized and sweet, about 10 min. Let cool.

Assemble casserole: Have the cooked lasagna noodles, mashed potatoes, caramelized onions and cheeses ready on a work surface. Arrange one layer of 4 lasagna noodles on the bottom of the buttered casserole dish, slightly overlapping the edges of the strips.

Spread a 1/2 -inch layer of potatoes on top of the dough. Top with some caramelized onions and a sprinkling of both Gruyere and cottage cheeses. Repeat the layers to use the remaining ingredients, finishing with the Gruyere and cottage cheese. Season the top with pepper.

Bake until the casserole is bubbly and the cheese on top is golden brown, about 40 minutes. Let rest 15 to 20 minutes and then serve with a dollop of sour cream and a sprinkle of chives, if desired.

Serves 8.

—adapted from foodnetwork.com

Chana (Chickpea) Masala

This naturally gluten-free vegetarian recipe has an incredible depth of flavor for something that comes together so quickly. I only added one jalapeño to keep it tame, but you could double the amount or use chopped Thai green, or bird's eye, chiles for even more spice. Eat it right out of the pan or, to stretch out the number of servings, dish over white or brown rice.

3 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 medium yellow onion, finely diced
1 tablespoon ground cumin
Sea salt
5 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons fresh ginger, minced
1/2 cup fresh cilantro, chopped, plus more for garnish
1 large jalapeño, seeded and chopped
1 tablespoon ground coriander
1 teaspoon chili powder
1 teaspoon ground turmeric
1 28-ounce can finely diced tomatoes
2 15-ounce cans chickpeas, rinsed and drained
Sugar
1 teaspoon garam masala
Juice 1/2 lemon, plus more to taste
Rice or roti, for serving, optional

Heat a large saucepan over medium heat. Once hot, add oil, onion, cumin and a generous pinch of salt.

Add garlic, ginger, cilantro, and chopped jalapeño and stir to combine. Add ground coriander, chili powder and turmeric and stir to coat. Add a little more oil at this point if the pan is looking dry.

Add canned tomatoes and chickpeas and another pinch or two of salt. If the mixture looks a little too thick, add a little water.

Increase heat to medium high until it reaches a rolling simmer, then reduce heat to low or medium-low and maintain a simmer (uncovered) for 15-20 minutes, or until thick and stew-like. Stir occasionally.

When the masala is thickened and bubbly, taste and adjust seasonings as needed, adding more salt for saltiness, chili powder for heat, or if desired, a bit of sugar for sweetness (and to offset the heat of the chilies).

Remove from heat and add lemon juice and garam masala. Stir to mix, then let cool slightly before serving. Enjoy as is or pair with white or brown rice and/or roti. Leftovers will keep covered in the refrigerator up to 4 days, or in the freezer up to 1 month.

Serves 4.

—adapted from minimalist-baker.com

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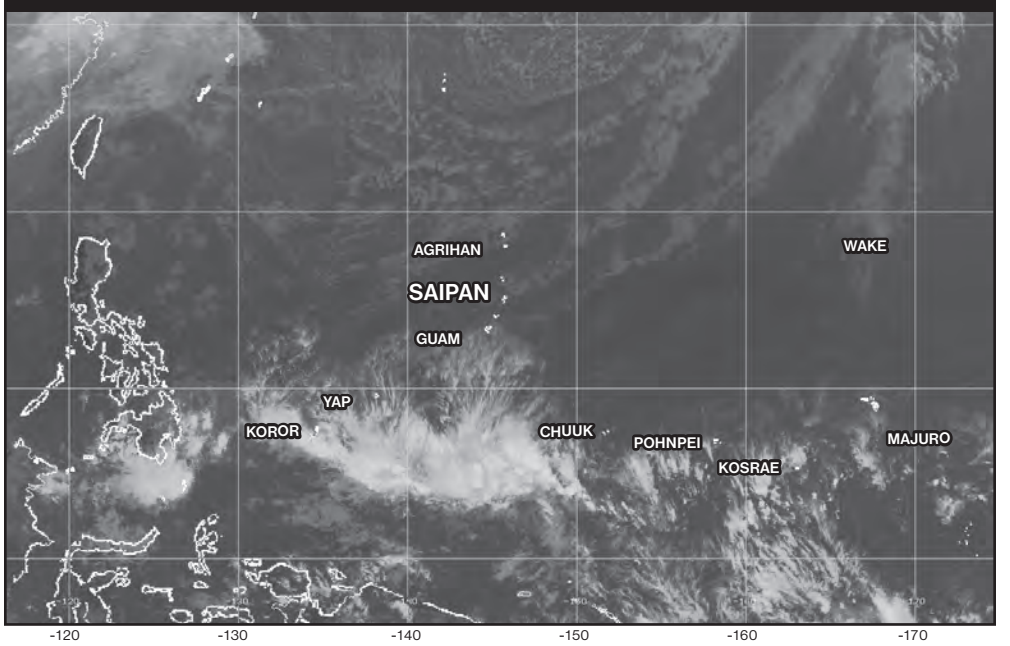
The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Breezy. Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 20 to 25 mph.	Breezy. Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 20 to 25 mph.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
84 74°	84 74°	85 75°	85 75°	85 75°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 5:53 AM WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows patchy clouds over the Marianas but more extensive clouds were just north of Saipan and drifting southward. Surface winds this morning are light to gentle from the northeast. Tanapag buoy shows combined seas around 5 ft, mainly from northeast but some components from the NW. Weather remains stormy over the Northern Pacific.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	84° / 76°
Palau	Cloudy	83° / 78°
Yap	Partly Cloudy	83° / 78°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	86° / 80°
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	85° / 79°
Kosrae	Cloudy	85° / 79°
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	85° / 80°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:34 AM	6:24 PM
Friday	6:34 AM	6:24 PM
Saturday	6:33 AM	6:24 PM
Sunday	6:32 AM	6:25 PM
Monday	6:32 AM	6:25 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	8:06 AM	8:31 PM
Friday	-	9:49 AM	10:55 PM
Saturday	-	10:29 AM	11:49 PM
Sunday	-	11:15 AM	-
Monday	12:46 AM	12:06 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	77° / 66°
Beijing	Fair	43° / 31°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	65° / 61°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	76° / 65°
London	Showers	52° / 46°
Los Angeles	Sunny	70° / 49°
Manila	Mostly Cloudy	88° / 75°
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	75° / 55°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	77° / 65°
New York	Cloudy	54° / 41°
Osaka	Fair	54° / 42°
Paris	Mostly Cloudy	52° / 45°
Busan	Partly Cloudy	52° / 35°
Rome	Cloudy	61° / 52°
Salem	Mostly Sunny	70° / 49°
San Francisco	Mostly Sunny	38° / 17°
Seoul	Cloudy	49° / 36°
Tokyo	Sunny	54° / 41°
Washington, DC	Light Drizzle	63° / 45°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
4:18 AM	Low Tide	0.52
10:14 AM	High Tide	1.66
4:59 PM	Low Tide	0.32
11:00 PM	High Tide	1.45

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

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SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Friday, Saipan Tribune offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3461	2:40PM	6:45PM	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3462	11:15PM	1:30PM+1	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3462	08:00AM	1:30PM	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

Crowne Plaza Resort to host Friends of Business Summit

» CyberTech Edition set for April 4

The excitement continues to build for the 2024 Friends of Business Summit: CyberTech Edition as the CNMI Small Business Development Center Network announces Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan as the venue for this groundbreaking event. The summit is scheduled to take place on April 4, 2024, promising a day of tech innovation, insightful presentations, and networking opportunities for businesses and government agencies across the CNMI.

Building upon the success of the previous announcement, where the CNMI Small Business Development Center Network revealed the collaboration with the Northern Marianas College's Office of Information Technology, the choice of Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan as the venue adds an extra layer of excitement and prestige to the Cybertech Edition of the Friends of Business Summit.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan will be the venue for the 2024 Friends of Business Summit: CyberTech Edition set for April 4, 2024.

The 2024 Friends of Business Summit: Cybertech Edition event aims to bring together the private and public sectors in the tech space from across the Commonwealth to explore the latest technological advances that can propel leaders in business, education, and central government into the digital age. This training opportunity and trade show event will be open to all current and future SBDC clients at no cost; however, pre-registration will be required. Due to limited seating, clients who do not have a confirmed reservation will not be admitted.

Join CNMI SBDC as it offers training opportunities where areas in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, smartphone usage, technological advancement in the workplace and education, and implementation of technological systems in governmental operations will be topics of discussion led by both local and national industry experts.

Key highlights:

■ Innovative presentations: Throughout the course of the day, industry experts and thought leaders will share insights into the latest technological trends and offer solutions on how businesses can leverage them for their growth and efficiency.

■ Trade show: A vibrant trade show will be a central part of the summit, featuring tech businesses showcasing their cutting-edge products and services, providing a unique opportunity for the community to interact directly with tech innovators and explore firsthand, solutions that will be made available to them and how best they can be implemented to support business needs.

■ Networking opportunities: The summit will foster networking opportunities, allowing attendees to connect with fellow professionals, government representatives, and tech industry leaders, building connections crucial for fostering collaboration and driving innovation.

"We are excited to bring the 2024 Friends of Business Summit: Cybertech Edition to the CNMI's business and education communities," said Nadine C. Deleon Guerrero, network director of the CNMI Small Business Development Center Network. "This event was designed to empower businesses with the market, knowledge, and resources they need to thrive in the digital era. We are grateful for the collaboration with our industry experts and the NMC's Office of Information Technology. We look forward to a day of learning, networking, and exploring the exciting possibilities that technology offers as we move into the age of digital transformation."

Attendance to the 2024 Friends of Business Summit: Cybertech Edition comes at no cost, but registration is required. To register, call the CNMI SBDC Network Lead Center Office at (670) 237-6888 or email cnmisbdc@marianas.edu. To stay updated with your local SBDC, visit @cnmisbdc on Instagram or follow us on FaceBook: https://www.facebook.com/cnmisbdc. Registration will close on Wednesday, March 27, 2024.

The CNMI SBDC Network promotes a business-friendly economic infrastructure in the community, builds entrepreneurial capacity and financial literacy within that community, and provides current and nascent small businesses with the technical assistance, counseling, training, and support they need to innovate, adapt, and grow.

For arrangements, contact your local SBDC at P.O. Box 501250 Saipan, MP 96950, Tel: (670) 237-6888, or email adelpha.magofna@marianas.edu. Services are extended to the public on a non-disciplinary basis. ***(PR)***

Yellen urges world leaders to 'unlock' frozen Russian Central Bank assets

WASHINGTON (AP)— Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Tuesday offered her strongest public support yet for the idea of liquidating roughly $300 billion in frozen Russian Central Bank assets and using them for Ukraine's long-term reconstruction.

"It is necessary and urgent for our coalition to find a way to unlock the value of these immobilized assets to support Ukraine's continued resistance and long-term reconstruction," Yellen said in remarks in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where Group of 20 finance ministers and central bank governors are meeting this week.

"I believe there is a strong international law, economic, and moral case for moving forward. This would be a decisive response to Russia's unprecedented threat to global stability," she said.

The United States and its allies froze hundreds of billions of dollars in Russian foreign holdings in retaliation for Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Those billions have been sitting untapped as the war grinds on, now in its third year, while officials from multiple countries have debated the legality of sending the money to Ukraine. More than two-thirds of Russia's immobilized central bank funds are located in the EU.

Using the assets to help Ukraine "would make clear that Russia cannot win by prolonging the war and would incentivize it to come to the table to negotiate a just peace with Ukraine," Yellen said.

The idea of using Russia's frozen assets has gained traction lately as continued allied funding for Ukraine becomes more uncertain and the U.S. Congress is in a stalemate over providing more support. But there are tradeoffs since the weaponization of global finance could harm the U.S. dollar's standing as the world's dominant currency.

Biden admin taps $366M to fund clean energy for Native American tribes and rural areas

The federal government will fund 17 projects across the U.S. to expand access to renewable energy on Native American reservations and in other rural areas, the Biden administration announced Tuesday.

The $366 million plan will pay for solar, battery storage and hydropower projects in sparsely populated regions where electricity can be costly and unreliable. The money comes from a $1 trillion infrastructure law President Joe Biden signed in 2021.

U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm called the announcement "historic" at a clean energy tribal summit in Southern California that began Tuesday.

"This is the largest amount that the Department of Energy has awarded to tribes for energy projects," she said.

About a fifth of homes in the Navajo Nation—located in northeastern Arizona, northwestern New Mexico and southeastern Utah—do not have access to electricity, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates. Nearly a third of homes that have electricity on Native American reservations in the U.S. report monthly outages, according to the Biden administration.

The announcement comes as Native tribes in Nevada and Arizona fight to protect their lands and sacred sites amid the Biden administration's expansion of renewable energy. It also comes days after federal regulators granted Native American tribes more authority to block hydropower projects on their land.

The Biden administration will only secure funding for the 17 projects after negotiating with project applicants, federal officials said.

Chéri Smith, president of the nonprofit Alliance for Tribal Clean Energy, called the announcement "bittersweet" and said it will take more money and support from the government and philanthropic groups to see the projects come to fruition.

"What these announcements do is they build hope for communities," Smith said. "Translating these ambitions into tangible outcomes—we still have a ways to go."

The projects span across 20 states and involve 30 tribes. They include $30 million to provide energy derived from plants to wildfire-prone communities in the Sierra Nevada in California, $32 million to build solar and hydropower for a Native American tribe in Washington state and $27 million to construct a hydroelectric plant to serve a tribal village in Alaska.

In 2019, the Hopi Tribe in Arizona lost jobs and a long-standing energy source when a massive coal-fired power plant shut down after nearly 50 years. It was a significant source of revenue for the Navajo and Hopi tribes.

The Biden administration plans to allocate more than $9 million for a project led by Arizona State University in partnership with the Hopi to build solar panels and battery storage for the tribe.

Kristen Parrish, a professor at Arizona State University's School of Sustainable Engineering and the Built Environment, said that the project will provide a reliable source of power to tribal citizens.

"Even more important than the fact that it's cleaner is the fact that it's reliable," Parrish said of the project.

The Department of Energy also announced funding for a $57 million project to provide solar power and battery storage for up to 175 community health centers in rural parts of the Southeast, including in Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina. ***(AP)***

Nation

Biden, party leaders implore Speaker Johnson to help Ukraine in 'intense' Oval Office meeting

WASHINGTON (AP)—Congressional leaders emerged from an "intense" Oval Office meeting with President Joe Biden on Tuesday speaking optimistically about the prospects for avoiding a partial government shutdown, but with new uncertainty about aid for Ukraine and Israel as the president and others urgently warned Speaker Mike Johnson of the grave consequences of delay.

Biden called the leaders to the White House in hopes of making progress against a legislative logjam on Capitol Hill that has major ramifications not just for the U.S. but for the world as Ukraine struggles to repel Russia's invasion with weapons and ammunition starting to run short.

"The need is urgent," Biden said of the Ukraine aid. "The consequences of inaction every day in Ukraine are dire."

Biden hosted Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., in the Oval Office along with Republican House Speaker Johnson and Vice President Kamala Harris. After the more than hour-long meeting, Biden pulled Johnson aside for a private conversation.

Democratic leaders upon exiting the meeting were blunt about the dangers Ukraine is facing.

"We said to the speaker, 'get it done," said Schumer. "I said I've been around here a long time, it's maybe four or five times that history is looking over your shoulder and if you don't do the right thing, whatever the immediate politics are, you will regret it.

Referring to Johnson, he said, "Really, it's in his hands. It's in his hands."

Schumer, who was joined by Jeffries in describing how the meeting went, called the session "one of the most intense I've ever encountered" in the Oval Office.

Johnson spoke to reporters on his own, without Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell by his side. McConnell voted for a $95 billion foreign aid bill earlier this month that would aid Ukraine and Israel, replenish U.S. defense systems and provide humanitarian assistance for Gaza and the West Bank, Ukraine and other populations caught in conflict zones. The bill passed the Senate 70-29, but the Republican-led House has not acted on it, despite pleas from McConnell and others for action.

Johnson, who rejected a U.S. Mexico border security compromise that was eventually stripped from the final product, signaled no change in his position on Ukraine aid. He said the Senate's package "does nothing" to secure the U.S.-Mexico border, the GOP's demand in return for helping Ukraine.

"The first priority of the country is our border, and making it secure," Johnson said.

The speaker's continued call for border changes has frustrated senators, who spent months negotiating a bipartisan border deal only to have House Republicans reject it at the urging of former President Donald Trump. The bill would have denied migrants the ability to apply for asylum at the border if the number of daily crossings became unmanageable for authorities, among other major changes.

"It's time for action" Johnson said of the border. "It is a catastrophe, and it must stop."

Schumer said Democrats, too, want to tackle the problems at the U.S-Mexico border, but that it will take time and "we have to do Ukraine right now." He said he discussed during the meeting his visit last week to Ukraine with other lawmakers and recounted the agonizing stories told by soldiers who have no ammunition left to fire.

In the meeting, "we made it clear how vital this was to the United States. This was so, so important, and that we couldn't afford to wait a month or two months or three months, because we would in all likelihood lose the war, NATO would be fractured at best, allies would turn away from the United States, and the boldest leaders, the boldest autocrats of the world ... would be emboldened," he said.

Trump and Biden won Michigan

DEARBORN, Mich. (AP)—President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump won the Michigan primaries on Tuesday, further solidifying the all-but-certain rematch between the two men—yet early results from the state were highlighting some of their biggest political vulnerabilities ahead of the November general election.

» But 'uncommitted' votes demanded attention

A vigorous "uncommitted" campaign organized by activists disillusioned with Biden's handling of the war in Gaza was making headway. It had already far surpassed the 10,000-vote margin by which Trump won Michigan in 2016, a goal set by organizers of this year's protest effort.

As for Trump, he has now swept the first five states on the Republican primary calendar. But there were early signs that Trump was continuing to struggle with some influential voter blocs who have favored former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley in previous contests. Haley's strongest performance Tuesday night came in areas with college towns like Ann Arbor, home to the University of Michigan, and suburbs around Detroit and Grand Rapids.

For Biden, the notable percentage of "uncommitted" voters could signal weakness with parts of the Democratic base in a state he can hardly afford to lose in November. Trump, meanwhile, has underperformed with suburban voters and people with college degrees, and faces a faction within his own party that believes he broke the law in one or more of the criminal cases against him.

Michigan has the largest concentration of Arab Americans in the nation. More than 310,000 residents are of Middle Eastern or North African ancestry. Nearly half of the Detroit suburb of Dearborn's roughly 110,000 residents claim Arab ancestry.

Both the White House and Biden campaign officials have made trips to Michigan in recent weeks to talk with community leaders about the Israel-Hamas war and how Biden has approached the conflict, but those leaders have been unpersuaded.

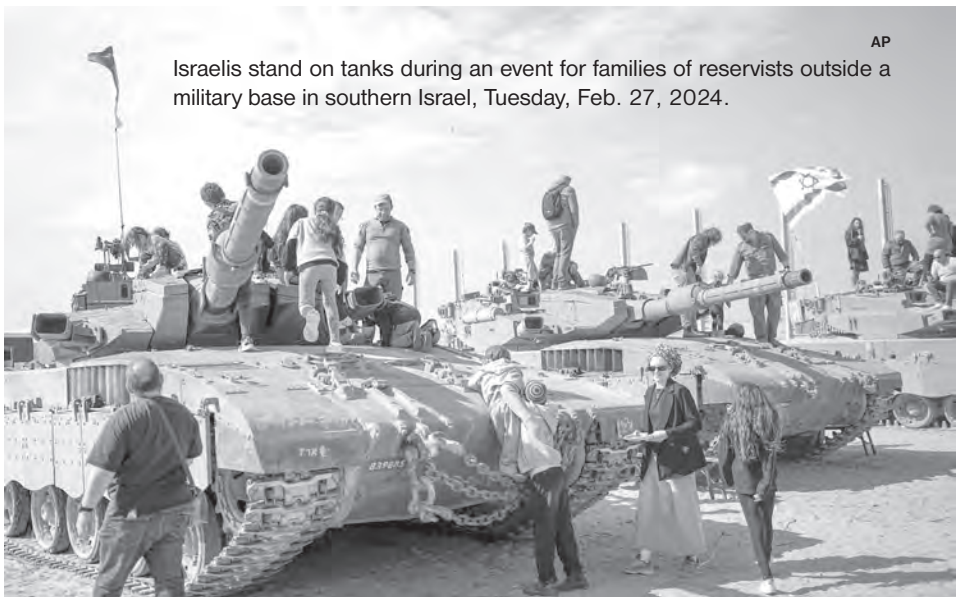
A robust grassroots effort began just a few weeks ago to encourage voters to select "uncommitted" as a way to register objections to the death toll caused by Israel's offensive. Nearly 30,000 people have died in Gaza, two-thirds of them women and children, according to Palestinian health officials.

That push has been backed by officials such as Democratic Rep. Rashida Tlaib, the first Palestinian American woman in Congress, and former Rep. Andy Levin.

"Uncommitted" votes were hovering around the 15% mark needed to qualify for delegates statewide. It was too soon to say whether the campaign would collect delegates locally.

World

An Israel and Hamas deal appears to be taking shape



AP

Israelis stand on tanks during an event for families of reservists outside a military base in southern Israel, Tuesday, Feb. 27, 2024.

CAIRO (AP)—Israel and Hamas are inching toward a new deal that would free some of the roughly 130 hostages held in the Gaza Strip in exchange for a weekslong pause in the war, now in its fifth month.

» What would it look like?

U.S. President Joe Biden says a deal could go into effect as early as Monday, ahead of what is seen as an unofficial deadline—the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, around March 10.

A deal would bring some respite to desperate people in Gaza, who have borne a staggering toll, as well as to the anguished families of Israeli hostages taken during Hamas' Oct. 7 attack that sparked the war.

Here is a look at the emerging agreement.

According to a senior official from Egypt, a six-week cease-fire would go into effect, and Hamas would agree to free up to 40 hostages—mostly civilian women, at least two children, and older and sick captives. Israel would release at least 300 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails, the official said.

Israel would also allow displaced Palestinians to return to certain areas in northern Gaza, which was the first target of Israel's ground offensive and suffered widespread destruction, according to the official from Egpyt, which is mediating the deal along with the U.S. and Qatar.

The Egyptian official said aid deliveries would be ramped up during the cease-fire, with 300 to 500 trucks entering the beleaguered territory per day, far more than the daily average number of trucks entering since the start of the war.

The deliveries to areas across Gaza would be facilitated by Israel, whose forces would refrain from attacks on them and on police escorting the aid convoys, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss details of the talks with journalists.

WORLD BRIEFS

Small drone flies into damaged Fukushima reactor for first time to study its melted fuel

TOKYO (AP)—A drone small enough to fit in one's hand flew inside one of the damaged reactors at the wrecked Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant Wednesday in hopes it can examine some of the molten fuel debris in areas where earlier robots failed to reach. Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings also began releasing the fourth batch of the plant's treated and diluted radioactive wastewater into the sea Wednesday. The government and TEPCO, the plant's operator, say the water is safe and the process is being monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency, but the discharges have faced strong opposition by fishing groups, as well as a Chinese ban on Japanese seafood. A magnitude 9.0 quake and tsunami in March 2011 destroyed the plant's power supply and cooling systems, causing three reactors to melt down. The government and TEPCO plan to remove the massive amount of fatally radioactive melted nuclear fuel that remains inside each reactor—a daunting decommissioning process that's already been delayed for years and mired by technical hurdles and a lack of data. To help fill in that data, a fleet of four drones were set to fly one at a time into the hardest-hit No. 1 reactor's primary containment vessel.

Two mayoral hopefuls of Mexican city shot dead within hours of each other

MARAVATÍO, Mexico (AP)—Two mayoral hopefuls in the Mexican city of Maravatío have been gunned down within hours of each other, as experts warn the June 2 national elections could be the country's most violent on record. The widening control of drug cartels in Mexico has been described as a threat. During the last nationwide election in 2021, about three dozen candidates were killed. The campaigns haven't even started yet. They formally begin on Friday. On Tuesday, this farming town, where most of the men wear boots and big belt buckles, was in a state of wary shock following the previous day's killings. Dozens of state police were visible around city hall. Talking about gynecologist Miguel Ángel Zavala, one of the murdered aspiring candidates, Maravatío resident and homemaker Carmen Luna said the crime was shocking and incomprehensible. "The way I see it, there's no explanation for killing a person ... it might have been a power struggle between them." Luna was one of Zavala's patients, and she ruled out any potential personal motive in his killing. "He was one of the best" doctors in town, she said. "He took care of me and was very good. He was very friendly." While she hasn't voted in years—"whether it's one or the other, everything stays the same"—Luna said the killings left people "angry and feeling powerless, because if the government doesn't do anything, you can't do anything."

Life & Style

Proof copy of Harry Potter book sells for more than $13K

LONDON (AP)—A proof copy of the first Harry Potter novel that was bought for pennies in a second-hand bookshop almost 30 years ago has sold at auction for 11,000 pounds ($13,900.)

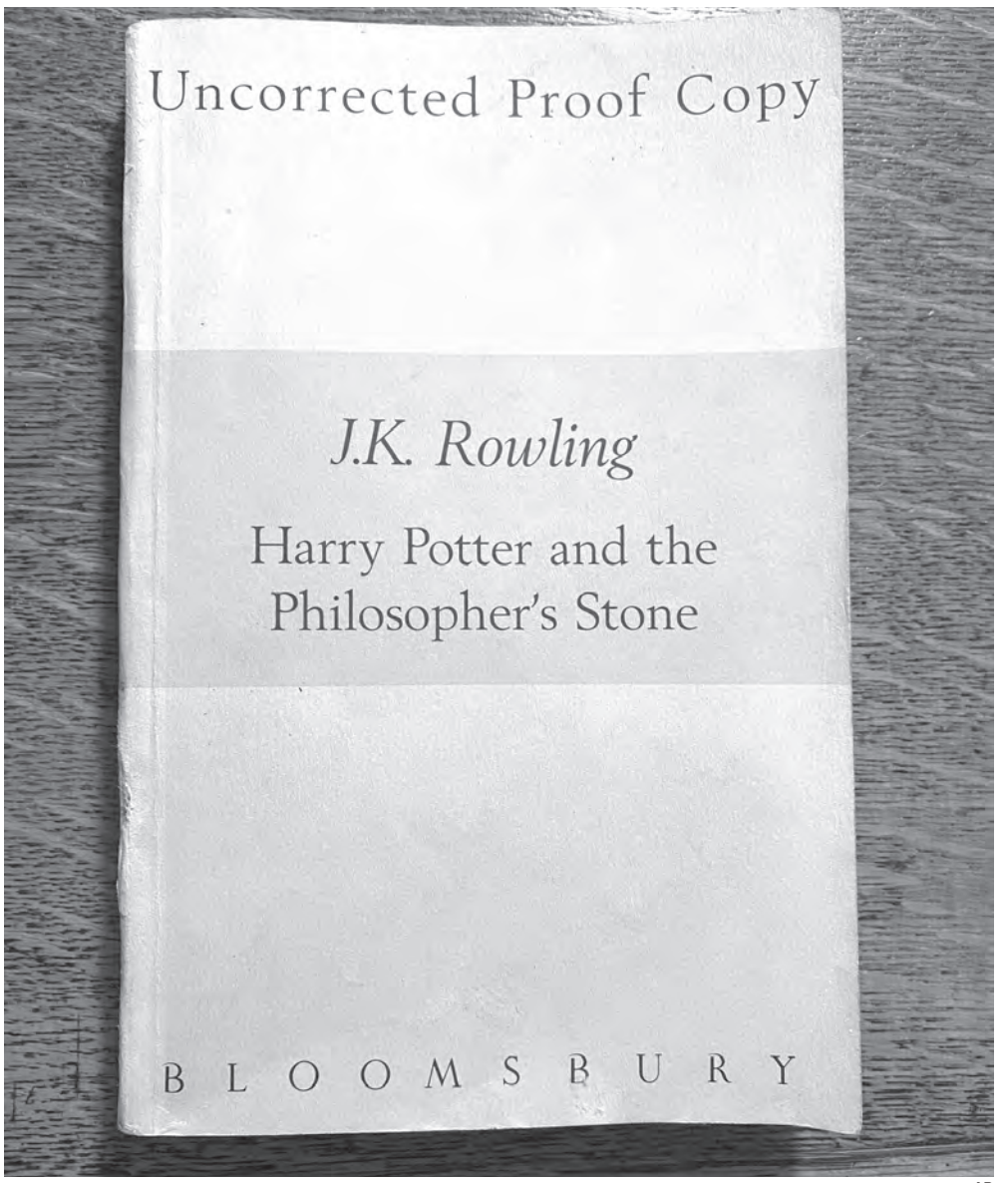
British auctioneers Hanson's said Monday that the first-edition copy of "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone," which states "uncorrected proof copy" on the cover, was bought in 1997 from a shop in south London with two other books for a total of 40 pence ($0.50.)

The seller, who was not named, picked up the book about the famous boy wizard as a "throw-in" with other titles and didn't read it or pay much attention to it for years—until she read online about the high prices some Potter copies achieved, Hanson's said.

The book was sold to a private U.K. buyer on Wednesday for a hammer price of 11,000 pounds, and a total of 14,432 pounds including a sales premium.

Jim Spencer, head of books at the auction house, said the copy's inside title page mistakenly stated the author's name as "J A Rowling" instead of J.K. Rowling.

"This book so deserved to do well. This proof copy is where the Harry Potter phenomenon began. This is the very first appearance in print of the first Potter novel," Spencer said.



AP

This undated photo issued by Hansons Auctioneers on Monday Feb. 26, 2024, shows a first edition Harry Potter novel.

2 men convicted of killing Run-DMC's Jam Master Jay nearly 22 years after shooting

NEW YORK (AP)—More than 20 years after Run-D.M.C. star Jam Master Jay was brazenly gunned down in his recording studio, two men close to him were convicted Tuesday of murder, marking a moment authorities had long awaited in one of the hip-hop world's most elusive cases.

An anonymous Brooklyn federal jury found Karl Jordan Jr. and Ronald Washington guilty of killing the pioneering DJ in 2002 over what prosecutors characterized as revenge for a failed drug deal.

The musician, born Jason Mizell, worked the turntables in Run-D.M.C. as it helped hip-hop break into the pop music mainstream in the 1980s with such hits as "It's Tricky" and a fresh take on Aerosmith's "Walk This Way."

Like the slayings of rap icons Tupac Shakur and the Notorious B.I.G. in the late 1990s, there were no arrests for years. Authorities were deluged with tips, rumors and theories but struggled to get witnesses to open up.

"It's no mystery why it took years to indict and arrest the defendants," Breon Peace, the top federal prosecutor in Brooklyn, told reporters after Tuesday's verdict. He said key witnesses "were terrified that they would be retaliated against if they cooperated with law enforcement."

"Their strength and resolve in testifying at this trial were a triumph of right over wrong and courage over fear," Peace added.

Jordan, 40, was Mizell's godson. Washington, 59, was an old friend who was bunking at the home of the DJ's sister at the time of the shooting on Oct. 30, 2002. Both men were arrested in 2020 and pleaded not guilty.

"Y'all just killed two innocent people," Washington yelled at jurors following the guilty verdict. Jordan's supporters also erupted at the verdict, cursing the jury.

Defense lawyers said they asked the judge to set aside the verdict and acquit them.

"My client did not do this. And the jury heard testimony about the person who did," one of Washington's lawyers, Susan Kellman, told reporters.

The men's names, or at least their nicknames, have been floated for decades in connection to the case. Authorities publicly named Washington as a suspect in 2007. He told Playboy magazine in 2003 he'd been outside the studio, heard the shots and saw "Little D"—one of Jordan's monikers—racing out of the building.

Relatives of Mizell welcomed the verdict and lamented that his mother did not live to see it.

Photographer accuses Taylor Swift's dad of punching him

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—A photographer told police he was punched in the face by Taylor Swift's father on the Sydney waterfront on Tuesday, hours after the pop star's Australian tour ended.

Ben McDonald said he provided police with a statement alleging that Scott Swift assaulted him at the Neutral Bay Wharf, where the father and daughter had just come ashore from a yacht.

The veteran paparazzo said he decided to report the attack to police despite not being seriously injured.

"It was just a punch in the chops. It's a little tender, but I don't have any bruising and it didn't require medical assistance," McDonald said.

"In 23 years, I haven't been assaulted and punched in the chops, particularly by the talent's dad," he added.

Niece's wedding planning charts disturbing course

DEAR ABBY: My niece, who is engaged, is blossoming into a full-fledged bridezilla. She has upset her mother so deeply that she may not attend the wedding. The bride is dictating what her guests are to wear, in addition to telling her mother what she is to wear that day. She has also ordered my sister to get hair extensions and have her makeup professionally done.

The list goes on and on. She brought her girlfriends to a bridal shop and, without asking about a budget, tried on gown after gown with no regard to cost. She fell in love with one that is beyond her mother's budget and demanded, "This is my dress!" My sister, wanting to avoid a scene, paid for it.

My sister has been excluded from all the wedding planning. The bride is deferring to her father and stepmother, who are paying for most of the wedding. If anyone offers a suggestion or asks a question, it is met with hostility. How do we handle this? My sister feels defeated and is deeply hurt by her daughter's actions.

AUNT OF A MONSTER

DEAR AUNT: This production (I hesitate to call it a wedding) has gone so far out of control that there is nothing you or your sister can do about it. Her chance to intervene and inject some sobriety vanished the moment she paid for the bridal gown she couldn't afford. If your sister can't afford hair extensions and a professional makeup job (and possibly a new dress) for her daughter's special day, she should consider coming just as she is and forgo being part of the wedding. She should also thank her higher power that she isn't being ordered to fly to Bermuda or Bali in order to participate.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My wife has been neglectful and hateful toward me ever since I was verbally abusive more than four years ago. I had fallen into a serious substance addiction around the same time, but I have been clean for more than a year. The addiction was another reason she is hateful toward me and holds a grudge.

I understand how addiction affects loved ones and that our relationship is probably over. My problem is, we have two very young children and split the mortgage and all other bills 50-50. I cannot afford to live on my own. She can't afford to live alone, either. I can't imagine trying to pay child support as well as rent somewhere else, even if I got another full-time job.

I have done everything I can to make amends, but there is no hope. We tried counseling. It didn't help. I don't want to abandon the kids, but I don't know what to do. Is there any hope at all?

LOW IN OHIO

DEAR LOW: So the abused has become the abuser. Unless your wife is willing to bury the hatchet (somewhere other than in you) and agree to marriage counseling with a different therapist, I don't think there is hope for the two of you. Ask her if, for the sake of the kids, she is willing to TRY. But if she refuses, consult an attorney about separating as amicably as possible.

■ ■ ■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

THERE!
WHATCHA DOIN'?
I'VE HIDDEN A CACHE OF SNOWBALLS BEHIND EVERY TREE IN THE YARD!
NOW WHEN MY ENEMIES COME AFTER ME, I NEED ONLY RUN TO THE NEAREST TREE TO BE INSTANTLY ARMED.
INGENIOUS.
NOW I NEED TO MAKE SOME ENEMIES.
I'LL BE ONE.
2-29

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

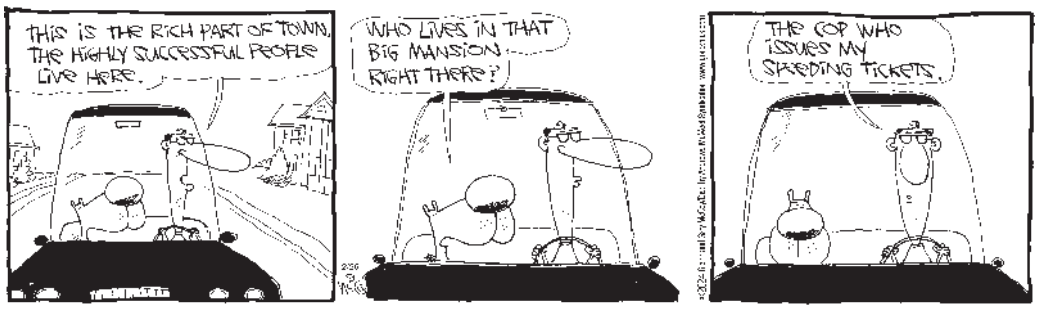
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

THIS IS YOUR OFFICE?
OH HI! YOU MUST BE LINDA, THE CLEANING PERSON.
THE COFFEE AURA IS STRONG IN HERE.
YEAH. HA. I DO LOVE COFFEE.
THIS IS A VERY DARK ROAST. TERRIBLE THINGS HAPPEN HERE.
WELL, MY LAST BOOK GOT SOME BAD REVIEWS, BUT I WOULDN'T SAY...
2-29

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


THIS IS THE RICH PART OF TOWN. THE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE LIVE HERE.
WHO LIVES IN THAT BIG MANSION RIGHT THERE?
THE COP WHO ISSUES MY SPEEDING TICKETS.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

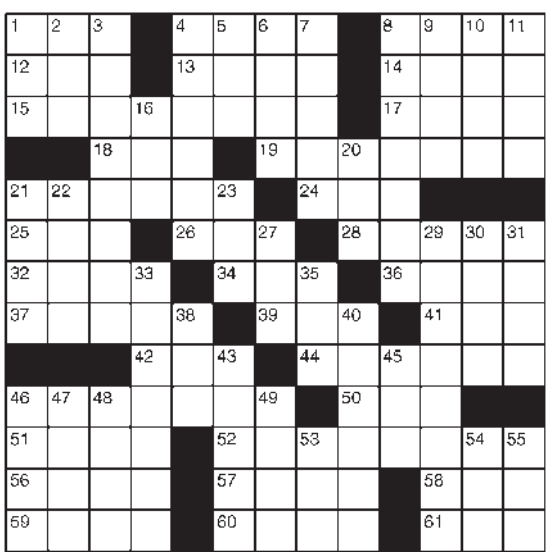
ACROSS
1 Tall tree
4 Wan
8 Sports group
12 Pub brew
13 Party cheese
14 Waffle brand
15 Self-disqualifications
17 Manhandle
18 Tempe sch.
19 February 29
21 Stately homes
24 NBC show since 1975
25 Flight stat
26 "Lion" actor Patel
28 — firma
32 Help a robber
34 Bit of advice
36 Beholds
37 Sierra —
39 PC alternative
41 Tax prep pro
42 Ostrich's kin
44 Whipped cream serving
46 Guest of a guest
50 Botanist Gray
51 Has a cold
52 New enlistees
56 Glazier's sheet
57 Nest egg choices
58 Chinese chairman
59 Latin I word
60 Author Vidal
61 Kinsey study

DOWN
1 Distant
2 Land in la mer
3 Took back
4 Ridiculous
5 Span. lady
6 Mound
7 Affirmatives
8 Synagogues
9 "Zounds!"
10 Water, to Juan
11 Holy — (GI entertainers)
20 Busy insect
21 Sir's partner
22 Jessica of "Dark Angel"
23 Matching pair
27 Energy
29 Captures again
30 Seized wheels
31 Now, in a memo
33 Long locks
35 Knee protector
38 Comic Philips
40 Sandpaper type
43 Strip, as a ship
45 Baton Rouge sch.
46 Mama's mate
47 Actor Hemsworth
48 Forearm bone
49 Architect Saarinen
53 Lot sight
54 Inventor's monogram
55 Boston squad, for short

Solution time: 24 mins.

H	E	P		M	O	A	T		M	E	M	E
I	T	O		A	L	D	O		O	R	A	L
S	T	E		L	E	D	A	S	T	R	A	Y
S	U	M	A	C			D	O	H			
			M	O	P	S		B	E	B	O	P
L	E	G	A	L	A	I	D		R	O	V	E
O	A	R		M	I	L	L	E		C	A	H
B	N	O	W		L	A	I	L	A	A	L	J
E	L	G	A	R		S	I	L	O			
			I	N	K			I	L	J	V	E
L	I	A	S	A	A	P	S	O		O	D	O
E	A	S	I		L	A	S	I		W	I	N
E	L	K	S		E	X	I	T		A	D	S

Yesterday's answer 2-29



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Jessie Usher, 32; Peter Scanavino, 44; Antonio Sabato Jr., 52; Joey Greco, 52.

Happy Birthday: Go above and beyond the call of duty when dealing with financial, medical or legal issues. You can accomplish plenty this year if you are thorough and personally oversee every transformation you desire. Refuse to let anyone talk you into something you don't need or want. A disciplined attitude will help you fulfill your dreams. Your numbers are 4, 13, 22, 24, 31, 33, 46.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Let's get physical. Embrace a new fitness routine, and make a physical change that empowers you to move forward confidently. Refuse to let what others do interfere with what's best for you. Say no to temptation. Make self-improvement and romance your priorities. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Don't get worked up. If you overreact, situations will escalate, and you'll lose control. Establish what you want and how to make it happen. Call on an expert, but do the work yourself. Don't give up on someone or something you love. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Talks will lead to trouble. Concentrate on what needs to be done, and take steps to complete anything you've left undone. Measure your progress by every achievement you make without letting anxiety take over. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Let your creativity lead the way and see what transpires. Whether you learn something new, travel or have deep discussions to find solutions, you will benefit the most if you share your vision. Find something that makes you feel passionate. ✪✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Don't fight the current; surrender and see where it leads. Learn to use what's available, and you'll gain ground and see new possibilities in what you discover. Set a budget that allows you to build a brighter future. ✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Start where you left off and finish what you started. Change requires a clean slate and no regrets. Tidy up and make way for what's to come. Embrace what's new and exciting, and enjoy the moment. Refuse to let negative people hold you back. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Don't pay someone to do something you can do yourself. The best way to avoid unsavory situations is to handle responsibilities swiftly and efficiently. Establish a budget that offers peace of mind and a chance to expand your interests. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Keep the peace. Concentrate on getting things done and initiating improvements that encourage less maintenance and offer more time to do things that bring you joy. An unusual pastime will change how you relate to others and how others view you. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* You'll accomplish more by working alone. Don't offer a breakdown of what you want to accomplish or a chance to steal your thunder. Don't buy into emotional manipulation to persuade you to go big or spend more. Stick to your comfort zone. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Distinguish between work and play. Refuse to let one interfere with the other. Change what's necessary and proceed. Balance and discipline will help you maintain your status quo and offer insight into what's important to you. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Emotional decisions will leave you second-guessing yourself. Slow down, rethink your strategy and simplify your original plans to fit your lifestyle and budget. A steady pace will get you where you want to go. Choose peace over chaos. ✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Consider your lifestyle and where your dollars go. Devise a plan to lower your overhead and reallocate what you save to encourage peace of mind and happiness. It's time to live life your way, but first, you must incorporate savvy domestic changes. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are articulate, innovative and secretive. You are determined and persuasive.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	7		5			9	1	
		3			6			
4	8			9		6		
		8	4		7	3		
	4		3				9	5
		6	9	2				
		4		7				
8				5				2
7			6	4		8	3	

Difficulty: ★★★ 2/29

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

9	5	2	4	7	8	1	3	6
1	7	4	9	3	6	5	8	2
8	6	3	2	1	5	9	7	4
4	2	7	5	8	9	3	6	1
3	8	6	1	2	4	7	5	9
5	1	9	7	6	3	2	4	8
2	3	1	8	4	7	6	9	5
7	9	8	6	5	1	4	2	3
6	4	5	3	9	2	8	1	7

Difficulty: ★★★ 2/28

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WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

IT'S A LEAP YEAR! Solution: 8 letters

P	E	R	C	E	N	T	A	G	E	T	U	N	I	M
A	M	P	R	O	P	O	S	E	V	L	O	V	E	R
R	N	O	I	T	I	D	A	R	T	E	Y	Y	G	O
T	U	C	O	D	P	A	R	T	I	A	L	R	X	T
Y	M	C	C	N	H	S	Y	A	D	E	E	A	E	A
R	B	A	A	O	O	C	E	H	T	G	L	U	N	T
A	E	S	L	C	U	M	T	A	O	I	C	R	I	E
S	R	I	E	E	R	R	M	R	R	T	Y	B	N	T
R	T	O	N	S	I	I	I	O	A	T	C	E	Y	A
E	E	N	D	B	X	A	A	F	C	R	H	F	T	R
V	N	A	A	O	Ⓝ	Ⓤ	Ⓢ	X	O	O	E	I	N	B
I	A	L	R	E	N	G	N	A	I	L	U	J	E	E
N	L	P	X	L	A	I	C	E	P	S	K	N	W	L
N	P	T	R	O	P	I	C	A	L	E	M	I	T	E
A	S	T	R	O	N	O	M	Y	R	U	T	N	E	C

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Anniversary, Approximately, Astronomy, Axis, Birthday, Calendar, Celebrate, Century, Common, Count, Cycle, Days, Earth, February, Folk, Gregorian, Hour, Julian, Minute, Moon, Next, Number, Occasional, Partial, Party, Percentage, Planet, Propose, Rare, Revolve, Rotate, Second, Special, Sun, Time, Tradition, Tropical, Twenty-nine

Yesterday's Answer: Smoothies

The NEW **Treasury 57** can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Celtics crush 76ers, Pelicans beat shorthanded Knicks

CLEVELAND (AP) —Max Strus drilled a 59-footer as time expired, his fifth made 3-pointer in the final four minutes, to give the Cleveland Cavaliers a wild 121-119 win over the Dallas Mavericks on Tuesday night.

After the Mavericks took the lead on P.J. Washington's dunk with 2.9 seconds left, the Cavs quickly inbounded the ball to Evan Mobley, who passed back to Strus - who made four 3s in a span of 67 seconds down the stretch to keep Cleveland close.

Strus then took a dribble before launching his shot from well beyond mid-court. As it swished through the net, Strus was tackled to the floor by teammates as the Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse crowd erupted.

Donovan Mitchell scored 31 points, Strus added 21 and Jarrett Allen 19 for the Cavs, who improved to 12-3 since Jan 26.

Luka Doncic had 45 points and 14 assists a day before turning 25 for the Mavericks. Kyrie Irving added 30 for Dallas, which lost for just the second time in 10 games.

AP

Cleveland Cavaliers guard Max Strus (1) watches his game-winning basket, next to Dallas Mavericks guard Luka Doncic (77) at the buzzer in an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Feb. 27, 2024, in Cleveland.

CELTICS 117, 76ERS 99

BOSTON (AP)—Jayden Brown scored 31 points and Boston earned its ninth straight win, powering past Philadelphia.

Jayson Tatum added 29 points, including 15 in the fourth quarter, to help the NBA-leading Celtics post their 25th consecutive home win over an Eastern Conference opponent.

Boston won despite connecting on just 5-of-22 3-pointers and committing 14 turnovers. But the Celtics outscored Philadelphia 64-48 in the second half and dominated with a 56-28 rebounding edge.

Tyrese Maxey led the 76ers with 32 points and five assists. Philadelphia has lost four of its last five and is just 4-8 since Joel Embiid was sidelined with a knee injury.

WARRIORS 123, WIZARDS 112

WASHINGTON (AP)—Klay Thompson scored 25 points on a forgettable evening for Stephen Curry, Chris Paul demonstrated his value to the Warriors in his first game in seven weeks, and Golden State beat Washington.

Curry was held scoreless in the first half for the first time in the regular season since Nov. 23, 2012, against Denver. He missed his first seven shots, six from 3-point range—and three of them airballs, including a 32-foot heave at the halftime buzzer.

Curry got on the board with a 3-pointer 53 seconds into the third quarter and the Warriors went on to outscore the overmatched Wizards 38-17 in the period. He finished with 18 points and shot 4 of 16 on 3-pointers while the rest of the Warriors went 17 for 30 from beyond the arc.

Jonathan Kuminga added 21 points for Golden State, which has won 11 of 14 and moved into ninth place in the Western Conference, percentage points ahead of the Los Angeles Lakers.

BUCKS 123, HORNETS 85

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Giannis Antetokounmpo had 24 points, Damian Lillard had 23 points and Bobby Portis scored 21 as Milwaukee pounded Charlotte for its most lopsided victory of the season.

Milwaukee rolled to a 58-26 lead at the break by holding Charlotte to the lowest point total any team had produced in a half all season. This represented the second-lowest point total the Bucks had ever allowed in the first half of a game, behind only the 25 they yielded in a 94-81 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers on March 3, 1972.

Milwaukee has won three straight since the All-Star break to improve to 6-7 under coach Doc Rivers. The Bucks have allowed fewer than 100 points in four of their last seven contests after reaching that goal just once in their first 52 games of the season.

Miles Bridges scored 17, Tre Mann 16, Brandon Miller 14 and Davis Bertans 12 for the Hornets, who lost for just the second time in their last seven games.

PELICANS 115, KNICKS 92

NEW YORK (AP)—Trey Murphy III scored 26 points, Brandon Ingram had 24 and New Orleans beat New York.

Zion Williamson added 21 points for the Pelicans.

Donte DiVincenzo led the Knicks with 23 points and Bojan Bogdanovic added 20 off the bench.

Jalen Brunson (neck spasms) and Isaiah Hartenstein (Achilles tendinopathy) did not play for the Knicks, who are still without starters Julius Randle, OG Anunoby and Mitchell Robinson.

TIMBERWOLVES 114, SPURS 105

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Anthony Edwards scored 34 points, returning from an injury scare right before halftime, and Minnesota beat San Antonio without All-Star Karl-Anthony Towns.

Towns missed the game due to personal reasons. Earlier in the day, Towns memorialized a high school teammate on Instagram. Minnesota coach Chris Finch said before the game that he hoped Towns would only miss one game.

Rudy Gobert, back after missing a game with a left ankle sprain, added 13 points and 17 rebounds for the Timberwolves in his latest matchup with fellow French countryman Victor Wembanyama.

Wembanyama had 17 points and 13 rebounds as San Antonio lost its fifth in a row and 12 of its past 13 games. Wembanyama scored eight points in just over five minutes to open the game but didn't score again until a 3 with 2:55 left in the third quarter.

HAWKS 124, JAZZ 97

ATLANTA (AP)—Jalen Johnson had 22 points with 13 rebounds and Atlanta never trailed after scoring the first 12 points and beat Utah.

The Hawks have won two straight games after losing All-Star point guard Trae Young for at least four weeks with a torn ligament in his left pinky finger. Dejounte Murray, who has taken over primary ball-handling duties, scored 17 points with 11 assists.

De'Andre Hunter scored 20 points Bogdan Bogdanovic had 19 in Atlanta's balanced attack.

Collin Sexton led Utah with 22 points. Walker Kessler added 14 points with 12 rebounds. Utah has lost six of its last seven.

MAGIC 108, NETS 81

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)—Franz Wagner scored 17 of his 21 points in the first half and Orlando rolled over Brooklyn.

Moritz Wagner added 16 points and five rebounds. Markelle Fultz and Cole Anthony scored 12 points apiece off the bench for Orlando.

Dennis Schroder scored 15 points in his third start for the Nets. Trendon Watford had 14 points and eight rebounds.

Forward Mikal Bridges, playing in his 450th consecutive games, scored four points, his lowest scoring output of the season. Bridges, who has never missed a game in his five NBA seasons, did not score in the first half and missed all seven of his 3-point shots.

PISTONS 105, BULLS 95

CHICAGO (AP)—Cade Cunningham scored 26 points and Detroit stopped a six-game losing streak by beating Chicago.

Owners of the NBA's worst record, the Pistons bounced back from a heated loss at New York the previous night and picked up just their ninth win of the season despite big efforts by Chicago's Nikola Vucevic, DeMar DeRozan and Andre Drummond.

Simone Fontecchio scored 17, and Jaden Ivey finished with 15 points, helping the Pistons beat the Bulls for just the second time in 18 games.

Vucevic had 25 points and 10 rebounds. DeRozan scored 25.

THUNDER 112, ROCKETS 95

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 31 points and Oklahoma City beat Houston for its sixth straight win.

Jalen Williams had 24 points and Chet Holmgren added 18 points and 13 rebounds for the Thunder, who held Houston to 38.9% shooting. Oklahoma City is tied with Minnesota for the best record in the Western Conference.

Alperen Sengun had 23 points and 11 rebounds and Jabari Smith Jr. added 18 points and 13 rebounds for the Rockets, who also lost to the Thunder on Sunday.

HEAT 106, TRAIL BLAZERS 96

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—Jimmy Butler had 22 points and nine assists, Terry Rozier scored 19 points and Miami beat Portland for its fifth straight win.

Rozier was one of three players returning to the Miami lineup, playing in his first game since sustaining a knee injury on Feb. 11 against Boston. Butler and Nikola Jovic both made their returns after serving a one-game suspension for their roles in an on-court altercation in New Orleans on Feb. 23.

The Heat also used their 31st different starting lineup of the season, tying a franchise record. The Heat also had 31 combinations in the 2014-15 season; they needed only 58 games to match that mark this season.

Anfernee Simons scored 26 points for the Blazers, who led by 15 points. Jerami Grant had 24 points, seven rebounds and six assists.

Refs admit they missed foul on what Pistons coach Monty Williams says was 'worst call of the season'

NEW YORK (AP)—Monty Williams walked all the way across the court from the Pistons bench to the opposite sideline, yelling at an official where he insisted a foul was missed.

"The absolute worst call of the season," Detroit's coach said later.

He was right: There should have been a foul called when New York's Donte DiVincenzo crashed into Pistons rookie Ausur Thompson's legs on the chaotic final possession that gave the Knicks a 113-111 victory on Monday night.

"Upon postgame review, we determined that Thompson gets to the ball first, and then was deprived of the opportunity to gain possession of the ball," crew chief James Williams said. "Therefore, a loose-ball foul should have been whistled on New York's Donte DiVincenzo."

By then, Williams had ripped the officials in remarks that lasted just over a minute.

"We're sick of hearing the same stuff over and over again," Williams said. "We had a chance to win the game and a guy dove into Ausur's legs and there was a no-call. That's an abomination. You cannot miss that in an NBA game. Period."

Once Thompson lost control of the ball, DiVincenzo regained it and the Knicks got it to Josh Hart, who made the go-ahead basket with 2.8 seconds remaining.

"That situation is Exhibit A to what we've been dealing with all season long and enough's enough," Williams said. "You cannot dive into a guy's legs in a big-time game like that and there be a no-call. It's ridiculous and we're tired of it. We just want a fair game called. Period. And I've got nothing else to say. We want a fair game and that was not fair. I'm done."

Coach Andy Reid expresses sorrow over parade shooting

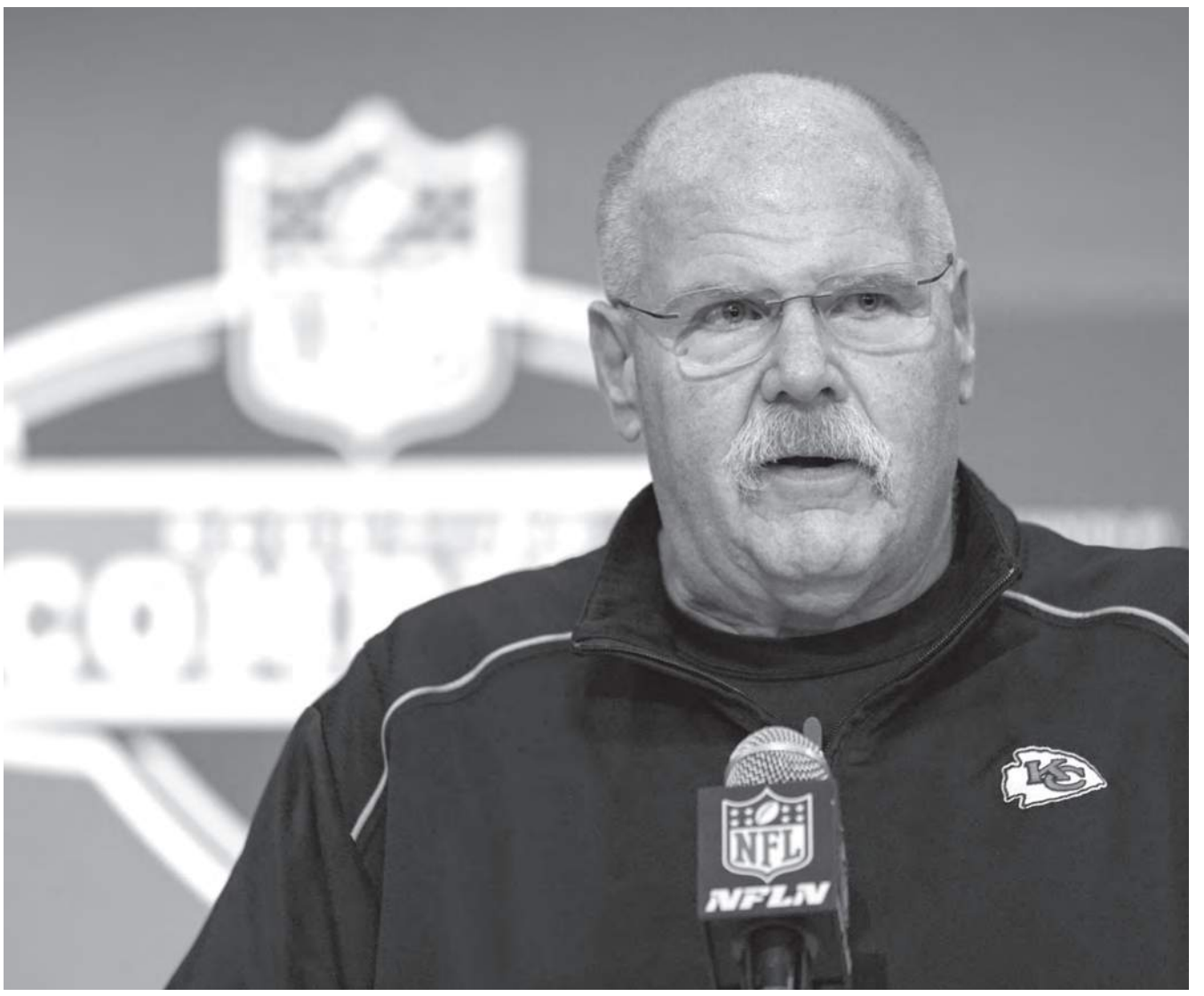
» Offers hope to avoid future tragedies

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Kansas City Chiefs coach Andy Reid walked to the podium Tuesday with a message that resonated beyond the football world.

He paid tribute to Lisa Lopez-Galvan, who was killed two weeks ago at the city's Super Bowl celebration, and he asked Americans to find ways to avoid another mass shooting tragedy.

It marked the first time anyone from the organization spoke publicly about the Feb. 14 shooting that left Lopez-Galvan dead and 22 others injured. The team had previously issued a written statement.

"I want to share my condolences for the Galvan and Lopez family for their loss of Lisa, and for the people of Kansas City," Reid said as he began his news conference at the NFL's annual scouting combine in Indianapolis. "She was a personality there, and a very good human being, first of all. We'll all miss her, as I know her family will."



AP

Kansas City Chiefs head coach Andy Reid speaks during a press conference at the NFL football scouting combine in Indianapolis, Tuesday, Feb. 27, 2024.

General manager Brett Veach reaffirmed those sentiments immediately after trading places with Reid.

Two people, Dominic M. Miller and Lyndell Mays, have been charged with second-degree murder of the 43-year-old mother of two.

The parade was intended to celebrate another milestone accomplishment for the Chiefs—becoming the first back-to-back Super Bowl champions since New England in the 2003 and 2004 seasons. Instead, it sent the Chiefs and their city into an offseason full of heavy hearts.

"Before we get into the football topics, I'd like to definitely start off by offering our thoughts and prayers to Lisa Lopez-Galvan and her family, all the families that were impacted the day of the parade," Veach said. "Certainly, a heartbreaking and tragic day for us. Our organization has been in contact with the families, and we will continue to do so and be a pillar of support for them both now and into the future."

Veach went on to thank the first responders who tended to the victims and helped bystanders navigate their way to safety.

Reid also urged people to understand the violence from the parade shooting is not an accurate representation of Kansas City and said he remains hopeful Americans can find a way to avoid similar violence in the future.

"Just a positive word on Kansas City, that's not what Kansas City is all about," Reid said, before addressing young people directly. "You're our future and as great as we can make this place, we want to do that. We can turn this, which was a negative, into a real positive. With just a little togetherness and love, we can fix a lot of problems."

Sean Payton hints at moving on from Russell Wilson

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (AP)—Sean Payton isn't providing anything definitive on Russell Wilson's time in Denver but he did hint at the Broncos moving on from him when he suggested the team cannot afford to miss on "the next one" at quarterback.

Payton met with the media at the NFL scouting combine in Indianapolis on Tuesday and said the club should know by the end of next week what direction they'll take at QB.

Asked if he embraced the idea of finding a solution at quarterback, one that's eluded coaches and GMs ever since Peyton Manning retired eight years ago, Payton retorted, "Yeah, we better. In this league, which is very competitive in our division, it's vital."

Payton then relayed a funny meme that caught his attention recently.

"There's a Broncos fan with a shirt on with like eight quarterbacks' names crossed through them and he's drinking the quarterback 'Kool-Aid,'" Payton said. "Our job is to make sure this next one doesn't have a line through it."

The next one.

That sounds as though Wilson's time in Denver might be over, something that's seemed imminent since he was benched for Jarrett Stidham the last two weeks of the season.

The Broncos have delved into the free agency class of quarterbacks and will meet with the college passing prospects at the combine this week.

Wilson, who has won just 11 of 30 starts with the Broncos since his trade from Seattle two years ago, said over the weekend that he hopes to return to Denver in 2024.

Wilson said he still aims to win a pair of Super Bowls in the next half decade.

"I want to go back to Denver. I hope I get to go back. I'd love to go back, to be honest with you. I've got amazing teammates," Wilson said on former NFL receiver Brandon Marshall's "I Am Athlete" podcast that went live Sunday night.

Wilson also repeated his contention that the Broncos threatened to bench him at midseason if he didn't adjust an injury guarantee in his contract, something the team has called a mischaracterization.

Wilson declined to remove the injury guarantee from the approximately $245 million contract he'd signed about a year earlier and ended up starting seven more games before Payton benched him for the final two games.

"I didn't want to set a precedent for players to remove their injury guarantees," Wilson told Marshall. "... No way I was going to do that."

On Tuesday, Payton said he didn't watch Wilson's appearance on the podcast and general manager George Paton demurred when asked about Wilson raising anew the notion that he was threatened with a benching if he didn't alter his contract.

"We've addressed that, and we moved forward. Everything we did was above board," Paton said. "I appreciate Russ, but we moved forward. We have a lot of work to do. We're here at the combine. We have free agency around the corner, and we're focused on bettering our team and winning football games."

If the Broncos are going to move on from Wilson after two mostly disappointing seasons, they'll have to do so before March 17, when his $37 million base salary for 2025 becomes fully guaranteed.

The Broncos owe Wilson $39 million in salary this upcoming season whether he's on their team or not. If they part ways, they'll also have to take an $85 million dead cap hit, more than doubling the record $40-plus million the Falcons incurred in dead cap charges following QB Matt Ryan's departure from Atlanta last year.

Despite benching Wilson after he threw for 26 touchdowns and eight interceptions in a bounce-back 2023 season, the Broncos have hinted a Wilson return was possible.

Wilson said he could play for Payton again and that he hadn't pondered other possible destinations. At one point in the podcast, Marshall joked with Wilson about where he'd live if he stayed in Denver given a recent report that Wilson and his wife, Ciara, are showing their $25 million Cherry Hills mansion to potential buyers.

"It's not on the market right now," Wilson said.

That could change soon.

Since Manning retired following Denver's triumph in Super Bowl 50, the Broncos have churned through five head coaches and 13 starting quarterbacks while going 52-79, missing the playoffs all eight seasons and posting seven consecutive losing seasons.

Newton involved in scuffle at 7-on-7 youth football tournament in Atlanta

A video surfaced Sunday that appeared to show 2015 NFL Most Valuable Player Cam Newton being involved in a scuffle at a 7-on-7 youth football tournament in Atlanta.

The video shows Newton, wearing one of his custom-made hats, being shoved by three people near the top of a set of steps before the pushing, shoving and grabbing moves toward a fence line. The video lasts less than 30 seconds before the altercation is broken up by a policeman and event security at the WeBall Sports x DynastyU 7v7 tournament at B.E.S.T. Academy.

Newton, the No. 1 overall pick in 2011 out of Auburn, does not appear to throw any punches in the video and appears to be fending off three other men. There is one punch thrown in Newton's direction, but it is unclear if the punch landed on the former quarterback.

It's also uncertain what prompted the altercation.

Newton, who is from Atlanta, runs the C1N, an organization founded in 2021 which focuses on developing young athletes' skills in football by providing opportunities to compete at the highest level through 7-on-7 tournaments and other events, according to Newton's website. The website said the organization's mission is to create an environment that fosters growth and development on and off the field, helping young athletes achieve their goals in football and life.

C1N plays in tournaments across the country.

Newton's 15-and-under team won the championship at the event.

Attempts to reach Newton's representatives on Sunday night were unsuccessful.

Newton hasn't played in the NFL since 2021 when he spent a portion of the season with the Carolina Panthers, the same team that drafted him.

Newton spent 11 seasons in the NFL, throwing for more than 32,000 yards and 194 touchdowns. He also ran for 75 TDs during his time with the Panthers and New England Patriots. ***(AP)***

Ohtani shows he's 'built differently,' slugs 2-run HR in first exhibition game with Dodgers

GLENDALE, Ariz. (AP)—Shohei Ohtani stepped into the bright Arizona sun, carrying the weight of a $700 million contract and the expectations that go with it, before launching a two-run homer in his first exhibition game for the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Not a bad way to endear himself to his new legions of fans—not to mention his new team.

"I'm starting to learn really quickly, he's built differently," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said.

Ohtani needed just three exhibition at-bats to show how he might impact the Dodgers lineup on Tuesday, working a full count in the fifth inning before an opposite-field shot off Dominic Leone that just cleared the left-field wall.

AP

Los Angeles Dodgers designated hitter Shohei Ohtani runs the bases after hitting a home run during the fifth inning of a spring training baseball game against the Chicago White Sox in Phoenix, Tuesday, Feb. 27, 2024.

The Japanese slugger was hitless in his first two plate appearances, striking out on four pitches in the first inning and hitting a hard grounder into a double play in the third.

"Definitely felt good at the plate, felt better each time," Ohtani said through a translator. "We're trending in the right direction."

The two-time Most Valuable Player received a standing ovation before his first at-bat at Camelback Ranch, where dozens of fans wore his No. 17 jersey and cheered his every move. The Dodgers—already one of MLB's premier franchises—have become even more popular after spending more than $1 billion to sign Ohtani and fellow Japanese pitcher Yoshinobu Yamamoto.

Ohtani spent his first six big league seasons playing for the Los Angeles Angels before signing with the cross-town Dodgers.

The three-time All-Star's first full swing on Tuesday wasn't exactly one of the memories. He missed the ball, his helmet tumbled off his head and it took a few seconds to gather himself before returning to the batter's box. But he bounced back from that awkward moment in a hurry, showing the power that's helped him hit 124 homers over the past three seasons.

The crowd roared when Ohtani connected and the cheers grew louder as the ball slowly drifted over the left-field wall, which helped the Dodgers beat the Chicago White Sox 9-6.

"I thought I hit it a little too high, but maybe the Arizona weather factored in a little," Ohtani said.

Ohtani was in the second spot of the lineup against the White Sox, sandwiched between leadoff hitter Mookie Betts and Freddie Freeman.

Roberts said all three stars were receptive to the Betts-Ohtani-Freeman lineup construction. The manager added that having Ohtani at the No. 2 spot wasn't "set in stone," but it's something he wants to try for a while during spring training. Catcher Will Smith hit cleanup and third baseman Max Muncy was fifth, giving a preview of what the top half of the Dodgers order could look like this season.

"I feel that having Shohei hitting in front of Freddie gives Shohei a lot of protection," Roberts said.

It was Ohtani's first spring training game since signing a record $700 million, 10-year contract—and first since right elbow surgery in September that will keep him from pitching this year. He was the designated hitter on Tuesday, a role he's expected to fill all season.

The 29-year-old is further along in his recovery than Los Angeles said it anticipated, and the team hopes he will be available when the Dodgers and the San Diego Padres play a two-game series in Seoul, South Korea, on March 20 and 21 to start the regular season.

Judging from his first spring training game, he's got a chance to be ready.

"Most importantly is his health," Roberts told reporters this week. "So if it lines up, great. And if it doesn't, then we'll still move on from there."

Why is there a pants problem in Major League Baseball during spring training?

MESA, Ariz. (AP)—Major League Baseball is showing off new uniforms during this year's spring training.

The biggest problem is they might be showing too much.

A series of pictures have shown a slightly embarrassing problem with MLB's new look: At least a handful of teams have white pants that are relatively see-through, making for some less-than-ideal pictures.

"I know everyone hates them," Phillies shortstop Trea Turner said last week. "We all liked what we had. We understand business, but I think everyone wanted to keep it the same way, for the most part, with some tweaks here or there."

That criticism might be a little harsh, but there are still some legitimate concerns about the uniforms with MLB's regular season approaching in about a month.

WHAT IS NEW WITH THE UNIFORMS

Nike has been designing MLB uniforms since 2020 and Fanatics has been manufacturing them since 2017, but this is the first year for the Nike Vapor Premier jerseys.

MLB officials say these uniforms improve mobility by providing 25% more stretch and also will dry 28% faster. The lettering, sleeve emblems and numbering are less bulky in an attempt to make uniforms more breathable and comfortable.

There are parts of the new uniforms that many players seem to enjoy, particularly the lightweight feeling. Players tried on versions of the new Vapor Premier uniforms during last year's All-Star festivities and many liked them.

SO WHY ARE PLAYERS UPSET

Generally speaking, athletes usually aren't big fans of change. That's certainly true of baseball players.

It's not uncommon for MLB players to be upset about something in spring training. Last year, the biggest complaints were about the sport's new rules package that included a pitch clock, bigger bases and limits on how many times pitchers could step off the rubber. Despite those misgivings, the rules package has been widely-regarded as one of the most successful initiatives MLB has unveiled in decades.

So when the players started complaining about the uniforms this spring, it seemed like normal blowback. MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred dismissed the criticism last week, saying players would get used to the uniforms and eventually like them.

But that's until the pants problem became known. Essentially, when players are wearing white tops and white pants, the tucked-in jersey sometimes make it look like players are wearing a diaper because the pants are relatively see-through.

There have also been distribution problems. Some teams have their 2024 uniforms, while others don't. The San Diego Padres used last year's white pants in their spring training opener on Thursday.

ANTONETTE

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personal best of 100 kg in the clean & jerk.

Her best snatch was 75 kg for a total weight of 175 kg. Labausa also participated in the 2023 Pacific Games in Honiara, Solomon Islands, nearly making it to the medal podium, as she finished fourth in her weight class with an overall weight lifted of 169 kg.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Antonette Labausa, right, won the bronze medal in the 81-kg senior women's weight class during the 2024 Oceania Senior, Junior, and Youth Championships that was held in Auckland, New Zealand from Feb. 17 to 25.

SFA'S

From page 20

derby, "We should see some exciting record-breaking catches."

The last derby was postponed a few times until it was staged last April 1, and when asked if the weather forecast for this year's derby is looking good, SFA president Tony Scragg said, "It may be a little bumpy—who knows. But we want to hold the derby while the mahi is still here. "

SFA is anticipating about 64 boats. "It all depends on the weather. The good thing about the mahi is that you don't need to go far. You can go right outside the channel and hook mahi there. The registration this year is the lowest—$100—that gets you a captain and an angler. Plus $25 gets you an extra angler," added Dancoe.

"We want to invite everyone to come out and take pictures of the fish," said Dancoe.

Last year, 52 boats participated, with first place won by the boat *10-7* captained by Keith Torres with their 26.2-lb catch; second was the *boat Ka Fish On* with a 22.2-lb mahi captained by Manuel Mogar; and third was the boat *Victoria* with a 22-lb haul captained by Diego Benavente.

The $2,200 side bet was won by the *Le'Ana Vae* with their monster 70.5-lb wahoo.

TORRES

From page 20

he started and that no matter how tough things get to never give up. I encouraged him to do better than me in every aspect of life and be committed to a lifetime of self-improvement. He's on track to doing just that and I'm proud of the young man he is becoming," said the DOC commissioner.

He added, "I also tell him to always put God at the center of everything, because God will guide him in the right direction."

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Isaiah Torres poses with his father, CNMI Department of Corrections Commissioner Anthony Torres, after his third-place finish in the Hawaii High School Athletic Association Boys State Wrestling Championship held last Friday and Saturday at the Brigham Young University-Hawaii.

Celtics crush 76ers, Pelicans beat shorthanded Knicks.

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Ohtani shows he's 'built differently,' slugs 2-run HR in first exhibition game with Dodgers.

PAGE 19

Antonette bags bronze in 2024 Oceania Weightlifting Champs

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Veteran weightlifter Antonette Labausa bagged a bronze medal in the 2024 Oceania Senior, Junior, and Youth Championships that was held in Auckland, New Zealand from Feb. 17 to 25.

Labausa struck bronze in the senior women's 81-kg category with lifts of a 75-kg snatch and a 100-kg clean & jerk, for a total of 175 kg weight lifted.

New Zealand's Hayley Whiting bagged gold after she lifted a total of 197 kg and silver went to Vanuatu's Ajah Pritchard Lolo with a total of 193 kg.

During her session, she said she wasn't expecting anything—but just to focus on her lifts. With that, she was able to hit a personal best in the competition total by an additional 2 kg and an international competition PB in the clean & jerk.

The 29-year-old Labausa said the competition was "awesome" and that she and the six-man team enjoyed it. "Our team was small but I think we represented the CNMI really well at the 2024 Oceania Championships," she said.

On how she felt heading into the championships, she said that she felt confident and in shape. "I was focused on hitting my goal of 180-kg total. I fell short by 5 kg, but I still had notable improvements and a bronze medal to be proud of," said Labausa.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Antonette Labausa in action during the 2024 Oceania Senior, Junior, and Youth Championships that was held in Auckland, New Zealand from Feb. 17 to 25.

She then thanked her partner Devine Pua for her unending support, her coach John Davis, and the CNMI Weightlifting Team for their help and support, and her family and friends for cheering her on.

Labausa was a 2023 NMSA Female Athlete of the Year nominee and Female Athlete of the Month for March. Last year, she competed in the 81-kg weight class in the Marianas Weightlifting Cup and won gold after setting a new

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SFA's 20th Mahi Fishing Derby this Saturday

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The Saipan Fishermen's Association 20th Mahi Fishing Derby is set for this Saturday, March 2, at the Smiling Cove Marina from 6am to 5pm, with the awards ceremony right after.

Registration is scheduled for tomorrow, Friday, March 1, from 4pm to 6pm. Prize for first place is $2,500, second receives $1,500, and third place gets $1,000. Fourth and fifth place gets in-kind prizes.

Curtis Dancoe, SFA chairman, said that this year's derby is special because not only is it the 20th annual derby, but it's also the first derby of the year organized by SFA.

The mahi derby is usually scheduled in either March or April because, Dancoe said, the mahi are here in our waters. "They're here waiting for the derby. They're out there and you can tell just by the catches that are coming in. They're medium sized, but by the time the derby comes, they're going to be even bigger," said Dancoe in an interview two weeks ago.

He said of the upcoming

See SFA'S on Page 19

LEIGH GASES
Saipan Fishermen's Association board members, including president Tonny Scragg, fifth from right, and chair Curtis Dancoe, fourth from right, pose for a group photo at the Last Shot Bar during a board meeting two weeks ago.

Torres places 3rd in HHSAA Boys Wrestling Championships

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Wrestler Isaiah Torres placed third in the Hawaii High School Athletic Association Boys State Wrestling Championship held last Friday and Saturday at the Brigham Young University-Hawaii.

Torres, son of CNMI Department of Corrections Commissioner Anthony Torres, secured a podium finish in the 126-lb weight class after he put up better numbers than Dylan Landford and won in a 4-3 decision.

Second place was Kulika Corpuz and first place went to Hunter Berger, who won via majority decision.

Isaiah said winning third place was a "very bittersweet moment" for him. He said, "I sacrificed so much to be here and left all my friends, family, comfort, and my home on Saipan to continue pursuing what I love here in Hawaii."

The 16-year-old said that he felt he could've done more in his match, "but all that hard work and sacrifice leading up to that moment really made me emotional and grateful for the opportunity. I had wrestled my third place match opponent earlier in the tournament in the quarterfinals and I beat him in a close match."

Isaiah, now a junior from Kalani Boys High School, attended Kagman High School when their family moved back to Saipan from the U.S. But his passion was in wrestling and decided to move to Hawaii to pursue it.

He started wrestling in Arizona after quitting football and fell in love with it from there. "I found the sport as a way to express myself and feel free from the problems all around me. It really has shaped me into a more disciplined, hard-working person," said the younger Torres.

The older Torres said of his son's accomplishments, "I am proud of all the hard work and efforts he puts into his wrestling and academics. He is committed to his sport, while maintaining a 3.9 GPA in AP classes."

When asked what advice he gives his son in what he does, he said he instilled in him qualities to help him develop and cultivate a growth mindset of mental toughness, grit, and resilience.

"I have always encouraged him to remain committed to his goals, to have a good attitude, always be respectful, assertive, humble, and be a good human being. To always finish things

See TORRES on Page 19

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Isaiah Torres, second from right, bagged third place in the Hawaii High School Athletic Association Boys State Wrestling Championship held last Friday and Saturday at the Brigham Young University-Hawaii.